

# seminar

# INDIA

1979  
13  
1979

**245**  
January 1980  
**annual**

# INDIA



OK-H06235-13-KP3845



## Split-second stopping. A life could depend on it

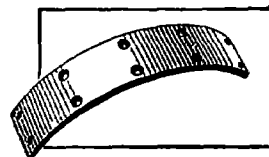
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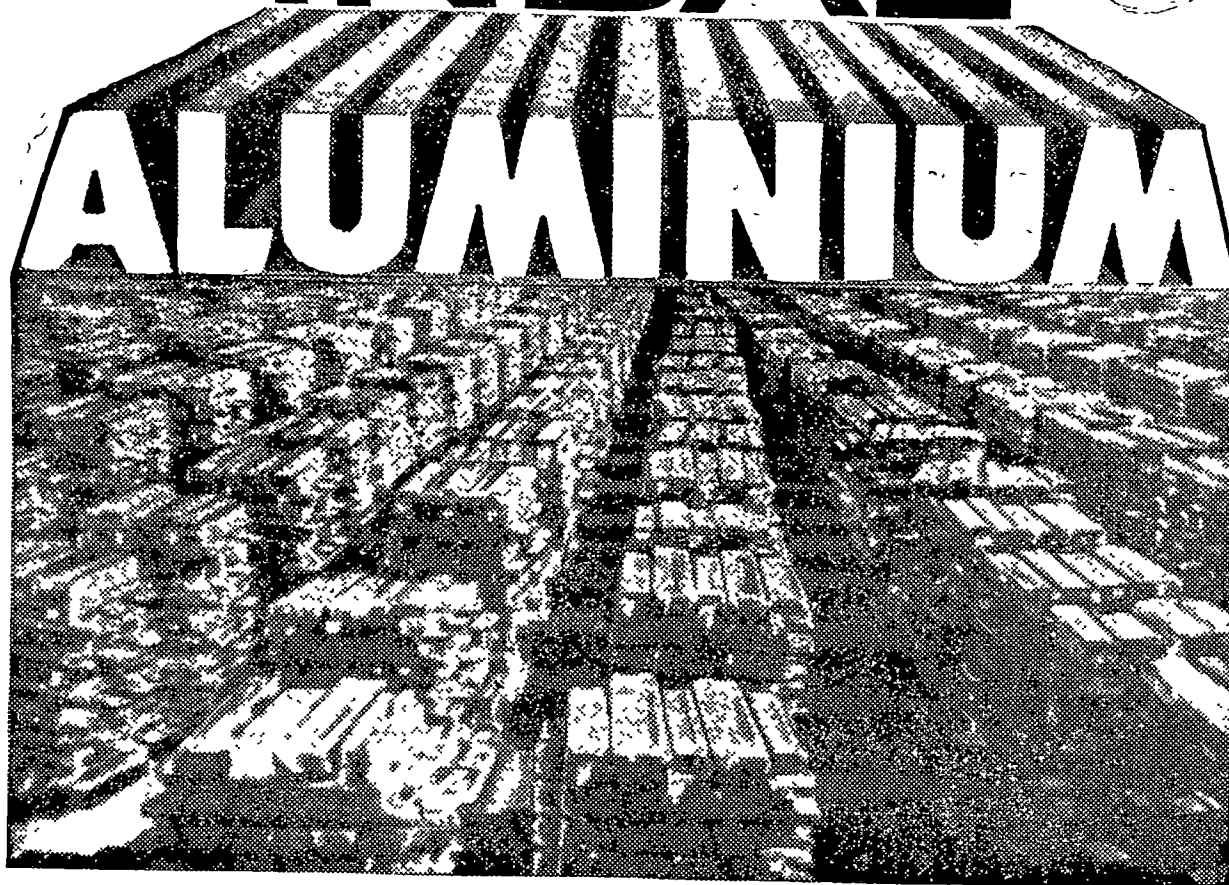
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# INDAL

13



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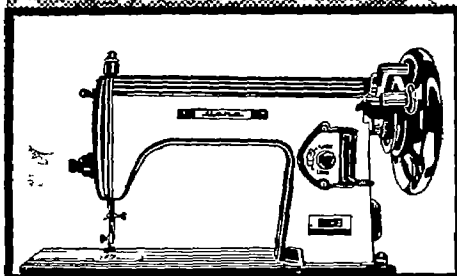
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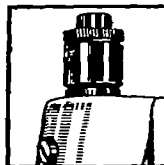


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## Versatile features

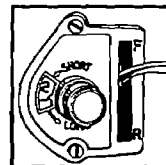
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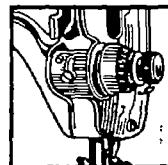
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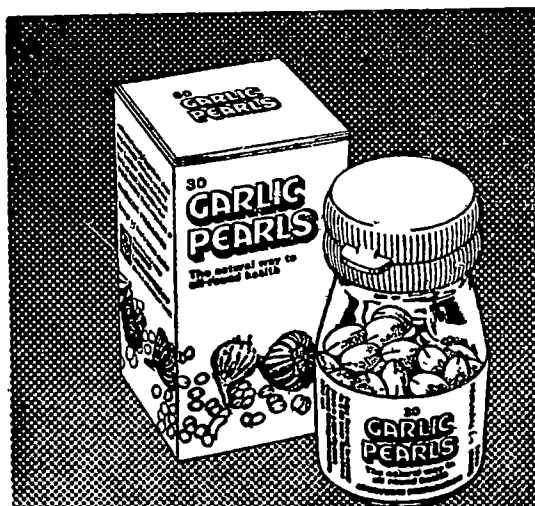
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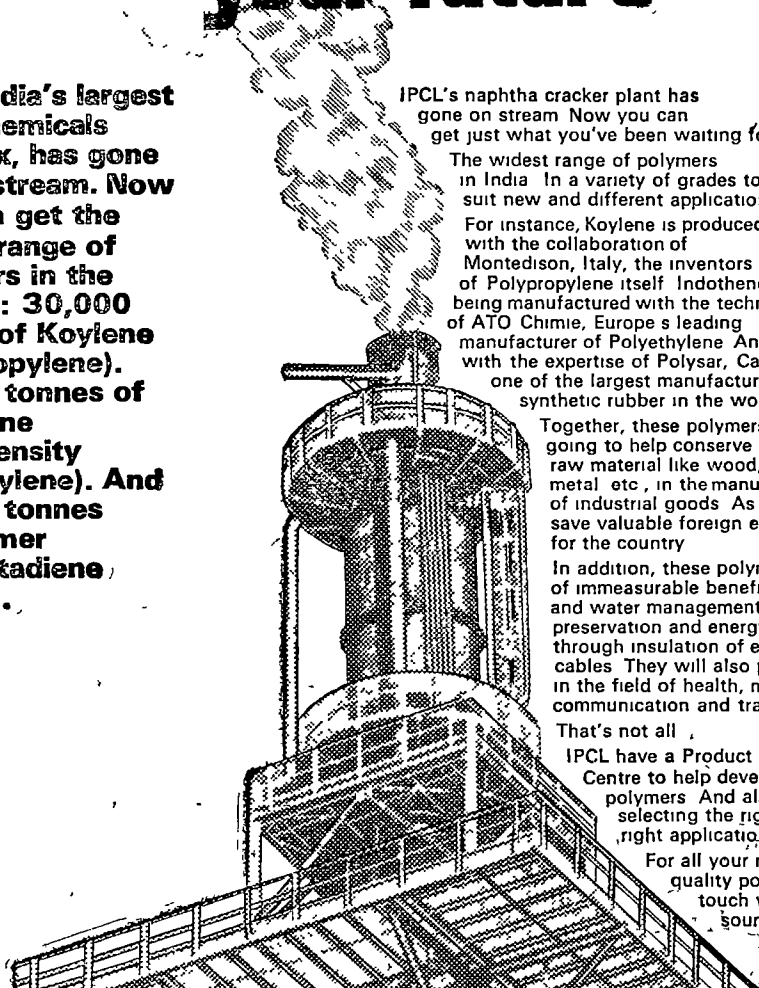
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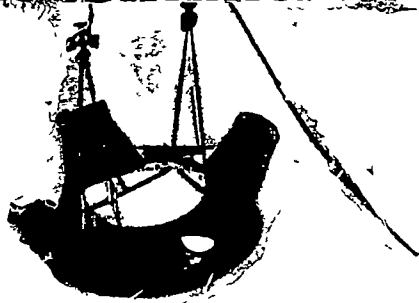
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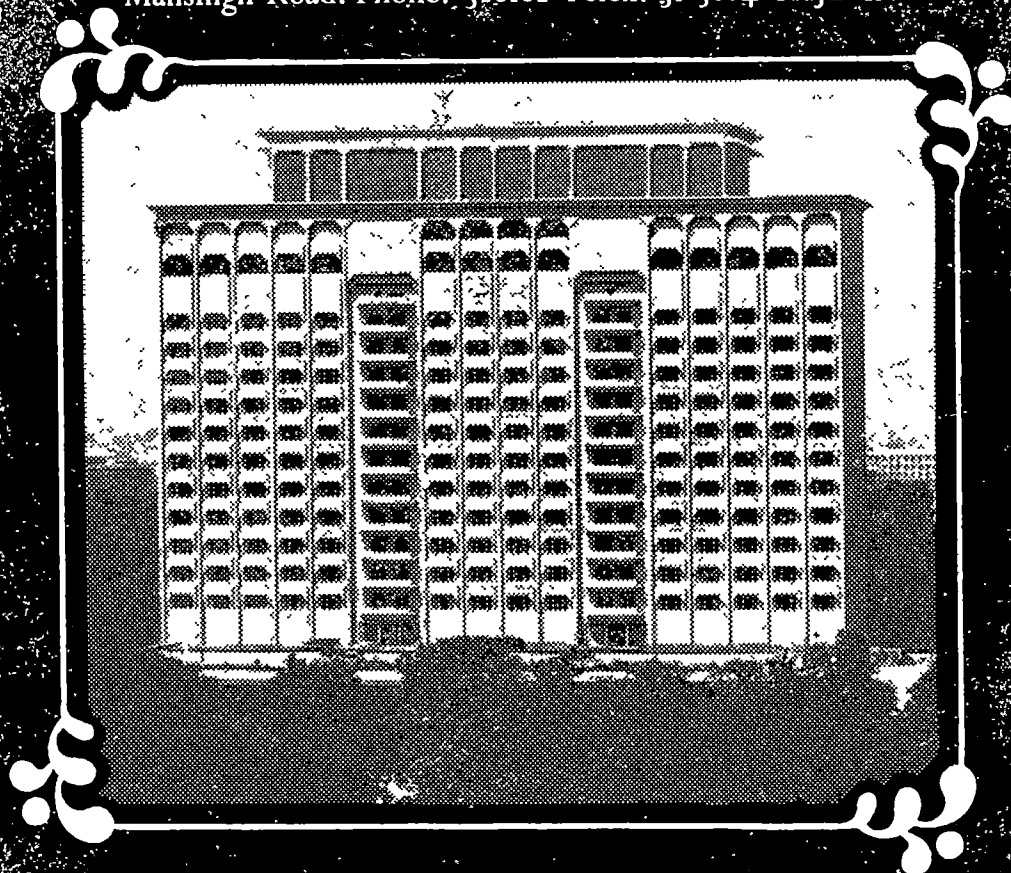


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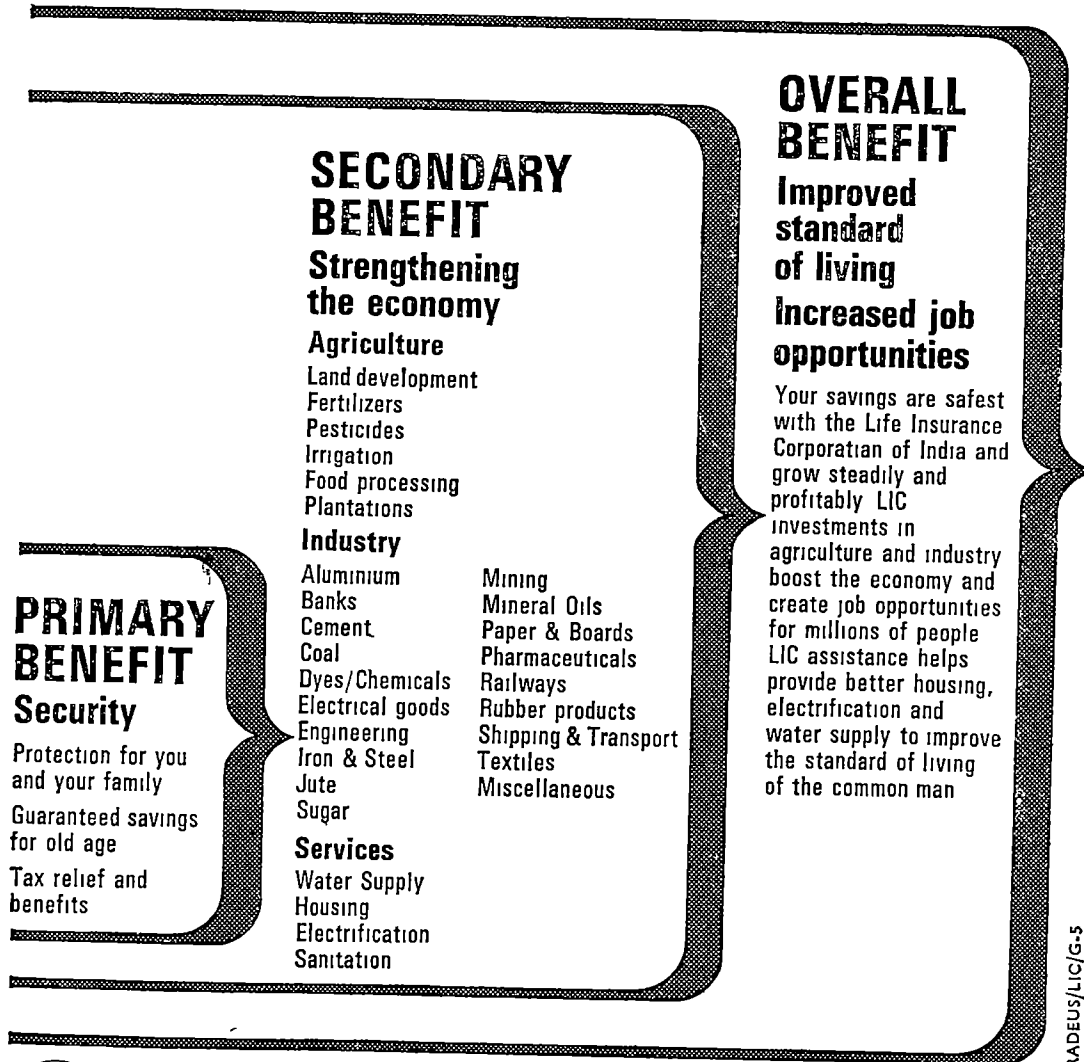
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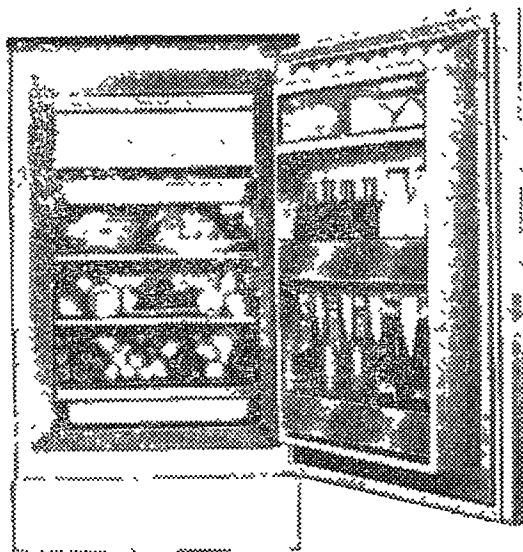
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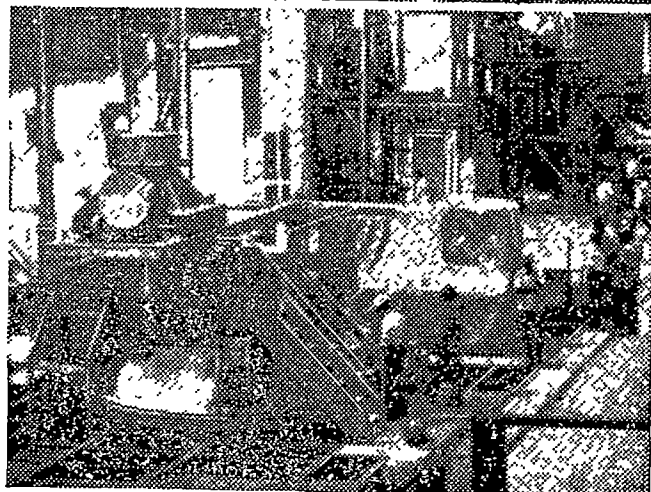
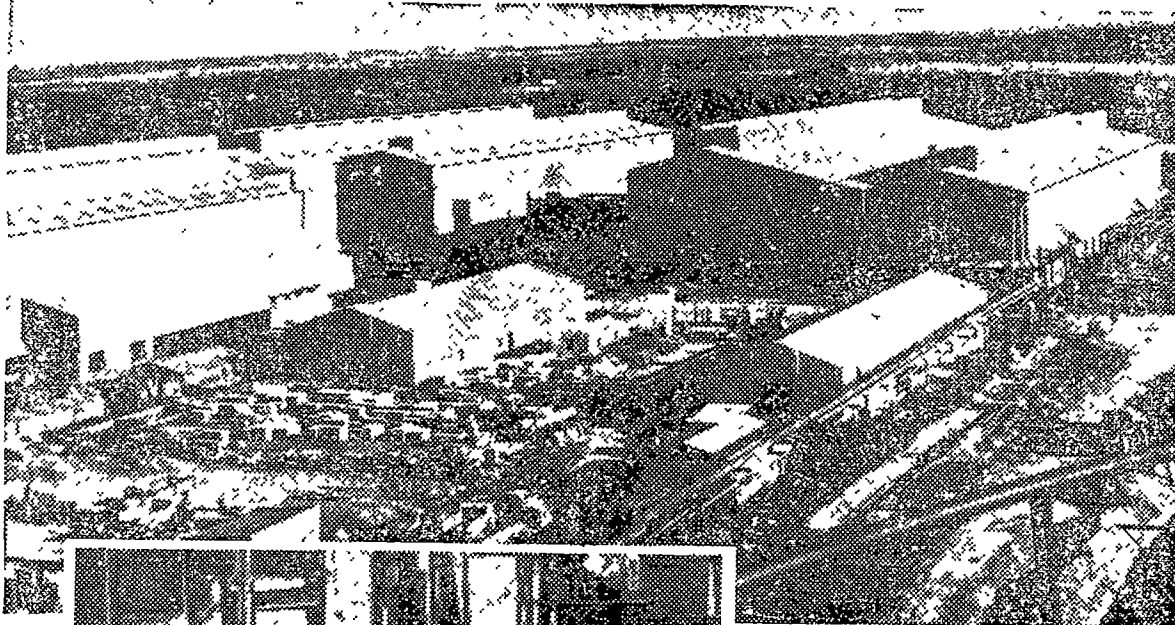
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*Vacuum induction melting and refining furnaces in Melt Shop II*

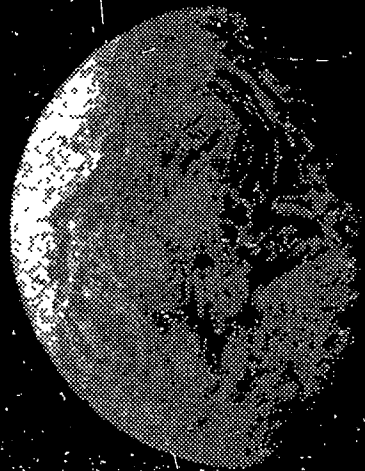
DASTURCO is proud to be associated as Consulting Engineers with this prestigious national project right from its conceptual stage. DASTURCO prepared the engineering report and is rendering comprehensive design and engineering services for the successful implementation and on-schedule completion of this exceedingly complex, high technology project.

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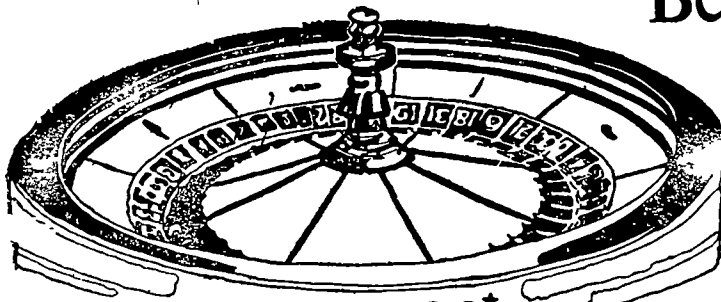
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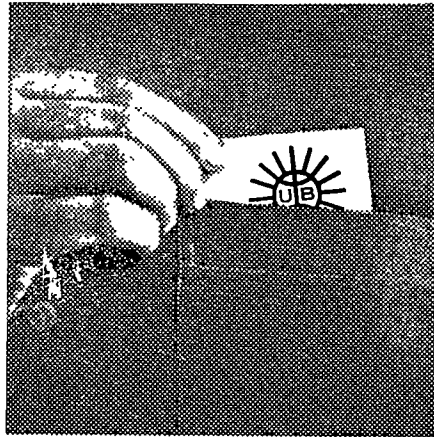
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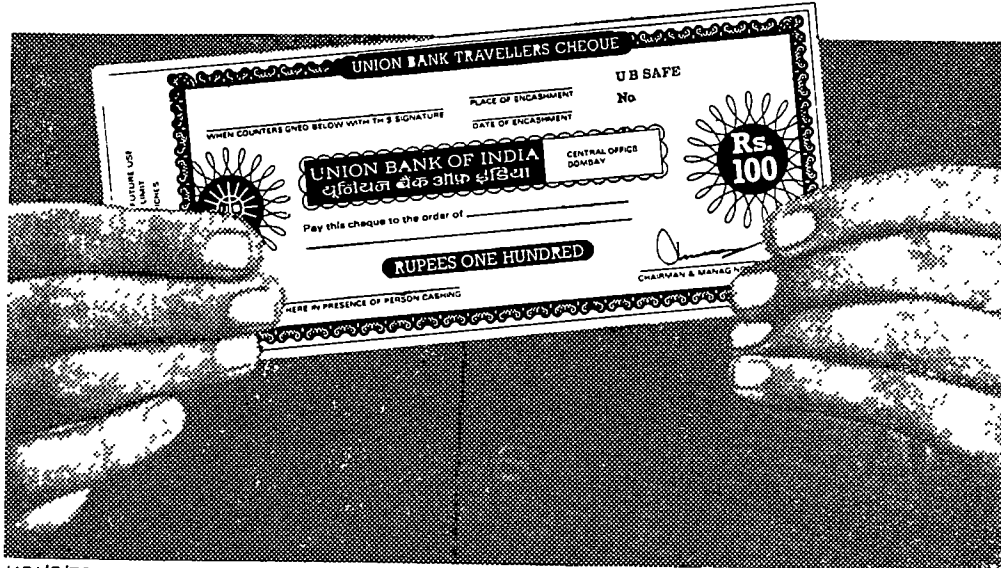
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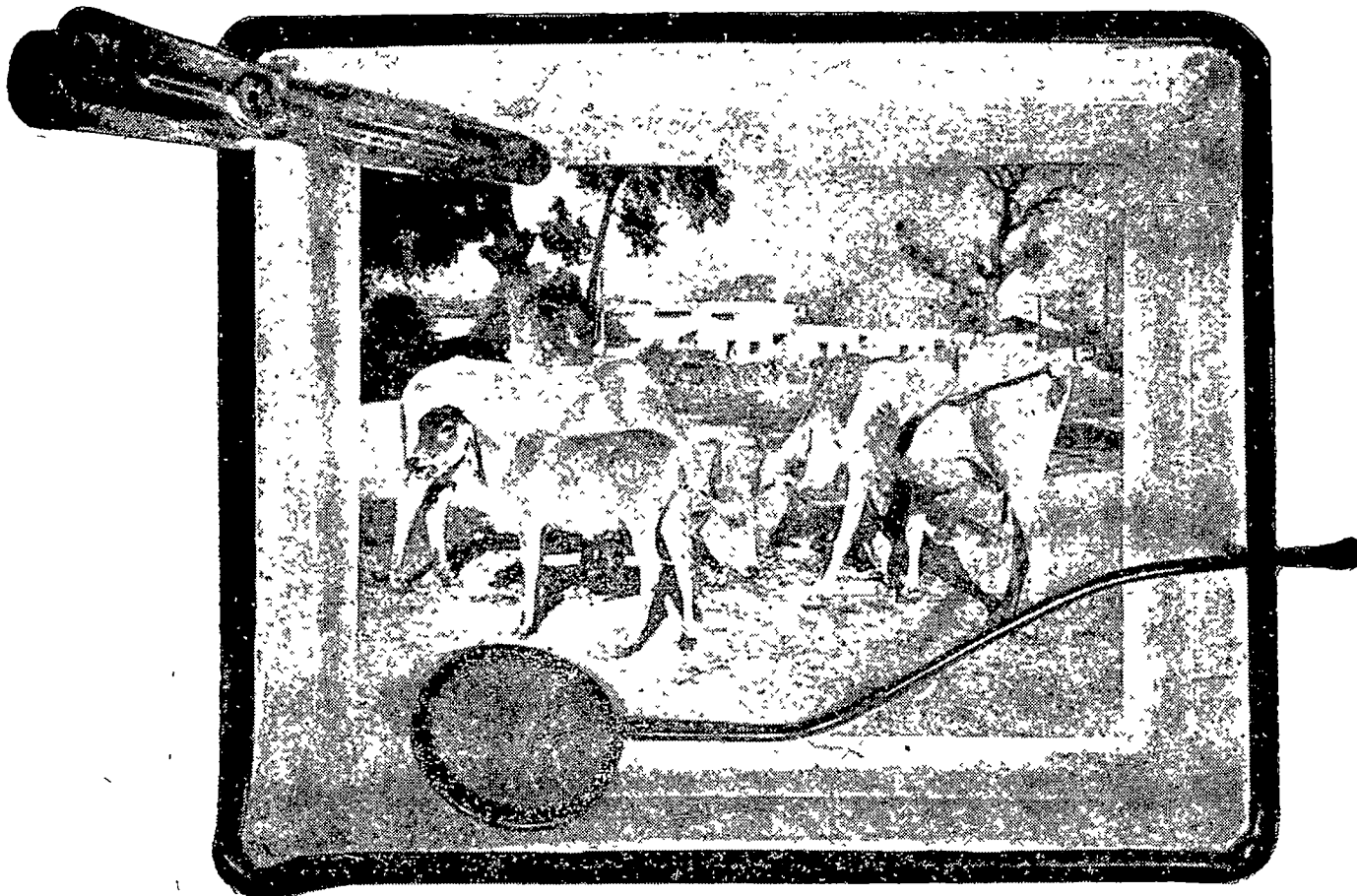
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## NEXT MONTH : EXTERNAL ACTION



# 245

## INDIA 1979

a symposium  
on the  
year that was

**symposium participants**

### THE CALL OF THE EIGHTIES

Rajni Kothari, Chairman,  
Indian Council of Social Science  
Research, Delhi

### BACKGROUND TO A CONTROVERSY

Satya Deva, Chairman, Department  
of Public Administration, Punjab  
University

### MINORITY PERSPECTIVES

Aloo J. Dastur, political scientist,  
until recently, Member of the  
Minorities Commission

### LEFT PROJECTIONS

Nikhil Chakravarty, Editor,  
'Mainstream'

### THE ECONOMIC MALAISE

Raj Krishna, Professor of Economics,  
Delhi University, until recently Member,  
Planning Commission

### PUBLIC ENTERPRISES—A BAD YEAR?

H. K. Paranjape, Chairman, Rail Tariff  
Enquiry Committee

### NON-ALIGNED MUTATIONS

Romesh Thapar, Editor,  
'Seminar'

### ISLAM'S NEW POSTURES

Bharat Wariavwala, Research  
Associate, Institute for Defence Studies  
and Analysis, New Delhi

### LIVING WITH ILLEGALITY

Ashok H. Desai, Barrister  
practising in Bombay

### OUR VANISHING ETHICS

Nayantara Sahgal, novelist and  
political commentator

### ON HEROISM IN OUR TIME

Nirmal Verma, leading  
Hindi writer

### DOCUMENT

An Agenda for India prepared by a working group.

### INDEX

A complete index of the twelve issues of 1979  
and Seminar's titles from one to two  
hundred and forty five

### COVER

Designed by Dilip Chowdhury Associates



# The call of the eighties

RAJNI KOTHARI

AS we look back on the decade of the 1970s, it presents a striking picture of wasted opportunities and a tremendous potential that went to roost. Technological capacities generated in the sixties found their fulfilment in the seventies and enabled the country to scale new heights of self-reliance. However, the fruits of such self-reliance failed to reach a large majority of the people who continued to live in a state of dependence and destitution.

The decade started with a dramatic demonstration of the country's military prowess (in Bangla Desh in 1971) and, three years later, another dramatic show of technological breakthrough (in Pokhran in 1974). However, lacking any vision guided by an overall sense of history at the top, these demonstrations of strategic might resulted in only producing a zone of insecurity in our neighbourhood and a steady decline in our role as both a regional and a world power.

At home, politics at last came face to face with the socio-economic aspirations of the people and in turn challenged the economic pundits to provide a framework of development that could deal with these aspirations. But there was more rhetoric in all this than a steady process of goal fulfilment. At the grass-roots level, the masses came into their own during the decade and showed remarkable capacity to register

their sentiments and assessments at the polls. But the institutional mechanisms through which messages of this type could be converted into political performance suffered steady erosion, a long period of suspension (1975-76) and ultimate collapse. By 1979, the year under review in this issue, the system had literally collapsed.

Meanwhile, the economy had come to depend so heavily on the State apparatus—the decade witnessed further encroachment of the State sector through nationalizations and multiplicity of controls and through a massive expansion of the bureaucracy—that its overall management and coordination suffered badly under unstable political conditions.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, the dependence of local elites on economic and administrative decisions at higher levels for dealing with changes in the rural social structure resulted in large-scale frustrations at the lower levels despite large-scale politicization of the masses. The result was that what could have been a period of major breakthrough in the socio-economic spheres turned out at the end to be one of virtual breakdown. All in all, what promised to be a decade

<sup>1</sup> The Janata period saw some major experiments in utilizing accumulated surpluses to the ends of social justice but lacking cohesion and continuity in office these came to nought.



of fulfilment of processes initiated in earlier decades turned out to be one of drift and demoralization

It is from the debris of the seventies that the nation must re-emerge and resume its pursuit of the inter-related goals of national integration, social justice, people's participation and rational use of resources and institutions. In order to meet such a challenge in full measure, it is necessary to analyze the causes of the damage done in the seventies. What factors underlie all the indicators of lack of performance and will in the various spheres of national endeavour?

Such an analysis points to nothing short of a breakdown of the institutional order that we gave to ourselves as an independent nation. It was an order that had been conceived and created through law, laid out in considerable detail of a practical and procedural kind at so many levels, and anchored into the national psyche through a set of norms and expectations, the proverbial 'rules of the game'

The framework of such an order was provided by (a) the representative system of parliamentary democracy, (b) the executive apparatus emanating from a cabinet system of government headed by a Prime Minister enjoying political primacy that derived its sanction and authority from cabinet colleagues collectively representing the ruling party or coalition, and (c) a legal system based on the one hand on an independent judiciary and on the other hand by making the President of the Republic the legal source of executive and legislative authority though himself always acting on advice of the cabinet and wielding political power only as a means of last resort

Such a system was conceived in (a) a federal framework of at once simultaneous and integrated loci of power, authority and legality, (b) a framework of rights and expectations provided by the constitutional provisions of Fundamental Rights of the citizens and Directive Principles of State Policy that were supposed to provide guidelines of State action, and (c) an electoral frame-

work on which was based the ultimate sanction for both power and legitimacy.

Giving to such a complex system of integration based on plurality an operational content was the party system which was to determine the interrelationship between different elements of the system. Herein lay India's unique model of democratic nation-building, at any rate for the first quarter of a century after Independence. During this period, the party system — and with it the whole framework of governance — operated in and around the Indian National Congress which had inherited a national consensus from the past and represented one in the present

This was laid out in the first main description of the model, 'The Congress System in India'.

The Indian system can be described as a system of *one party dominance* (which, it may be noted, is very different from what is generally known as a one party system). It is a competitive party system but one in which the competing parts play rather dissimilar roles. It consists of a *party of consensus* and *parties of pressure*. The latter function on the margin and, indeed, the concept of *margin of pressure* is of great importance in this system. Inside the margin are various factions within the party of consensus. Outside the margin are several opposition groups and parties, dissident groups from the ruling party, and other interest groups and important individuals. These groups outside the margin do not constitute alternatives to the ruling party. Their role is to constantly pressurize, criticize, censure and influence it by influencing opinion and interests inside the margin and, above all, exert a latent threat that if the ruling group strays away too far from the balance of effective public opinion, and if the factional system within it is not mobilized to restore the balance, it will be displaced from power by the opposition groups. Both the idea of an inbuilt corrective through

factionalism within the ruling party, and the idea of a latent threat from outside the margin of pressure are necessary parts of the one party dominance system. It is an assumption of the system that the party of consensus, which is presumably the only legitimate instrument of power, is sensitive enough to public pressures and demands, but a safeguard is nonetheless provided through the operation of the *latency factor*, so that there is always available an identifiable group or groups which can be called into action for the preservation of competition and external control, if the normal mechanism provided by competing elites within the party fails to respond. The sensitivity of the entire system depends on the sensitivity of the *margin of pressure*, its flexibility and general responsiveness being a function of the elbow room it provides to factions, dissident groups and opposition parties in the making of critical choices and decisions.<sup>2</sup>

Such a party system, by simultaneously providing a framework of authority and direction and a framework of participation and competition, enabled the larger institutional order to spread itself out and find roots in the social system

Now it is clear that almost the entire institutional order described above (not just the Congress system) has very nearly broken down. The system has undergone a series of changes

- (i) the displacement of a cabinet system by a Prime Ministerial system of governance,
- (ii) the abrogation of parliamentary supremacy over the executive by first permitting a brute use of party majorities by the executive wing and then undermining the simple mechanics, let alone the

<sup>2</sup> 'The Congress System in India', *Asian Survey*, December 1964, reproduced in *Party System and Election Studies*, Occasional Papers I of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Allied Publishers, 1967. For an earlier and more detailed delineation see my 'Party System', *The Economic Weekly*, June 3, 1961



spirit, of electoral mandates by frequent recourse to defections and the toppling of duly constituted governments,

- (iii) the erosion of the federal framework by recourse to similar practices engineered from the very apex of the system,
- (iv) the undermining of judicial independence and probity by executive manipulation of the concept of parliamentary supremacy,
- (v) the uncalled for use of Presidential powers first by a Prime Minister and then by a President and,
- (vi) above all, the systematic erosion of the party system, the real arena for the democratic political process, and its gradual displacement by personalized caucuses buffeted by corrupt bureaucrats who have been coerced into giving up the norms of a non-partisan and law-abiding administration

**B**y the time the March 1977 election took place the institutional order was already in shambles. Lacking a full grasp of the political challenge it faced, the Janata government failed to measure up to the totality of the task before it. Its real failure was not in respect of implementing socio-economic programmes, in point of fact its record in this respect is rather good, surprising though this may sound thanks to the peculiar aptitude of Janata leaders not to claim and often even run down their own achievements.

Nor did its real failure lie in the fact that there were bickerings among the various constituents of the party, while this tarnished the party's overall reputation and ultimately led to an atmosphere that proved conducive to its disintegration, and while an early split in the party could have prevented such an outcome, such bickerings and factional disputes have been part of the Indian political culture for a long time and it was only to be expected that a 'party' that was put together almost over-

night by bringing such diverse and disparate elements together would be prone to such divisiveness.

The Janata Party's real failure, which in turn greatly exaggerated its factional bickerings and ultimate collapse, lay in not perceiving the real threat to the system held out by the anti-system forces and suppressing them in their prime, both legally and politically. Its failure lay in not fully reversing the damage that had been done to the Constitution in the interest of personal protection and immunity as well as of executive privilege as against that of the judiciary. And its greatest failure in this respect, of course, lay in not initiating a political process — through extending parliamentary supremacy over the executive, through decentralizing the constitutional apparatus, through electoral reforms and, above all, through party-building at the grass roots — that would make it impossible for the return of authoritarian and anti-people forces.

Failing to bring about these real changes in the political framework, the Janata was unable to fill anything of consequence in the vast vacuum that was left behind by the politics of institutional erosion that had taken place during the years before it came to power, so that when its house crumbled, there was nothing to take its place (except for a caretaker rump asked to somehow carry on in power). What was left behind was an even larger void than was created by the defeat of the Congress in 1977. The void as has been filled by the politics of make-shift alliances, instant ideologies, shameless defections, cheap parochialism and an unprecedented play of money, banditry and rumour-mongering aimed at insecure and ambitious individuals.

**W**here do we go from here? That, incidentally, was the title of the historic July 1976 issue of *Seminar* after which it was forced to close down publication.<sup>3</sup> I had contributed an article in that issue entitled

<sup>3</sup> The decision to cease publication was of the publisher, following the government's order asking it to submit each issue to pre-censorship. The journal reappeared in February 1977.

'Restoring the Political Process'. The main thrust of my argument in that article was that while the suspension of the political process during the Emergency had produced severe strains on the system which could be dealt with only by lifting the Emergency, it was also necessary to deal with the crisis of the system that had prevailed before the Emergency by (a) putting an end to the politics of confrontation and chaos that had obtained for a long time before the Emergency, by restoring the rules of the game and creating a climate of trust and confidence, and (b) by resuming a framework of consensus and integration based on a wide ranging structure of participation, by putting an end to centralization, by enabling the federal polity to come back into its own, by reviving democratic decentralization, by reactivating the democratic process within the dominant Congress Party, and by providing to various parties and groups access to power at different points along the federal axis.

**I**t seems to me that while a good part of the general argument made in that article still holds true in any effort to restore a democratic order, and that while in many ways the crisis that we face today is very similar to the one that prevailed in the years preceding the Emergency, today it is necessary to think beyond mere 'restoration'. For, it is clear by now that underlying the malaise that has overtaken our political system for the last decade or so are some basic inadequacies of the very system that we had given to ourselves at the start of our career as an independent nation through the constitutional document, the framework of power provided by the Congress system and the instruments of policy and implementation provided by the 'steel framed bureaucracy' and the planning machinery.

In fact, the Janata government's efforts to 'restore the political process' (the only major change being that the Congress was replaced by the Janata as the dominant party and as the main arena of power) have further exposed — and more clearly demonstrated — the inadequacy of the system we gave to ourselves thirty years ago. To a cer-



tain extent the inadequacies that were brought forth during the Janata rule can be traced to Janata's own style of functioning and the internal compulsions of that party. But to a much larger extent the inadequacies seem to be inherent in (a) the original institutional model of democratic governance, and (b) the changes that have overtaken that model through a process of historical mutation which too was inherent in the model.

**T**he model that we adopted suffered from an insufficient attention to relate instrumentalities to goals and lack of clarity about the institutional implications of the basic ideology of democratic nation-building with the result that before long the instrumentalities took on a momentum and autonomy of their own and the ideological goals, while continuously affirmed, became secondary. The crisis in our polity is very often described as a crisis in leadership.

Now, to the extent that a confident nation-building ethos has not just slithered into a drift but has given place to a *policy* of drift, it is no doubt the result of leadership failure. But to the extent that entrenched social interests have acquired a hold on the policy-making process and a whole structure has come into being which prevents the system from forging ahead to fulfil its goals, the reasons for the crisis must be looked for elsewhere. They are to be found not just in what has *gone* wrong, but also in what was wrong from the beginning which we failed to correct in the course of the past quarter century.

We went in for a model of 'development' that was borrowed almost indiscriminately and which in a way was based on premises diametrically opposite to the premises of a competitive democratic order. We went in for a model which, in our conditions, was to produce for a limited class, to exploit the lower strata of the society, to ignore agriculture, and to give rise to a consumer-oriented society based on the western model. It gave rise to a parasitic middle class, filled the coffers of an even more parasitic business class, and in course of time corrupted the administrative and political

structure of the country. Given the present model and the relationship between production and distribution, in a word, given the western style of industrialization that we are pursuing, we shall produce nothing but consumerism, corruption, revolts, disorder, and ultimately the collapse of the democratic order.

**E**ven more basic to our neglect of relating means to ends is an educational system which has produced a deep schism in our society. Far from equalizing opportunities between social classes, it has further widened the differentials between them and has become an instrument of privilege for a few, deprivation for the many, and alienation for most.

This need not have been so. Education could have been made an instrument of equality, of development of the downtrodden, and of a basic sense of unity among all. This is in fact what the leaders of the independence movement and the constitution-makers intended when they stipulated that universal adult literacy should be achieved in fifteen years. A campaign to this end had also been started to eradicate illiteracy. But our acceptance of the model of modernization based on urban-type industrialization soon led to an exaggerated emphasis on higher education as a necessary prerequisite of economic advancement, and hence to a shift from spreading literacy and minimum education for all to producing a small elite of highly educated people through the university system located mainly in metropolitan and urban areas. Later, the system was extended to smaller towns where politicians clamoured for setting up colleges as a means of displaying their influence and extending patronage. These politicians have cared little to spread literacy and primary education among the mass of the people.

And, yet, all available evidence suggests that education tends to increase one's prospects in life. Education is known to heighten political awareness, to develop the capacity to relate the self to the environment, to imbue a sense of belonging to the wider society, to impart skills to enter the economic

system and bend it to one's own interest and an ability to deal with others in terms of mutual rights and obligations, and to generate an aspiration to improve one's own position by increased effort and assertion vis-a-vis the wider society. Education (not necessarily very high education) is the single most important socio-economic characteristic that explains differentials in economic, political and social capabilities. To deny it to the large majority of the people and to give it in great abundance to a few describes a condition of great inequality in life chances.

**T**he choice of an economic model that has produced a highly unequal — and dualistic — society, and the choice of an educational system that has sustained this inequality, were the glaring errors made by the post-independence leadership which was enchanted by western style modernization. But these two by themselves would not have made for a *system* of inequity controlled and manipulated by a small elite, were it not for a third, a major miscalculation by the leadership. This was its choice to continue with the colonial pattern of administration and bureaucracy for governing the country and its social and economic infrastructure. After independence this infrastructure became elaborate and included a vast array of undertakings as well as a structure of linkages with sectors of life which do not ordinarily come under the purview of the State.

Now, not only has our attempt to usher in an era of modernization through active State intervention given to the colonial type administration and the educated class that mans it, a position of pre-eminence in the country, it has also reinforced the Indians' traditional acquiescence in the authority of a Brahminic class and its close alliance with the administrative apparatus and its rule-bound norms of behaviour. The British found in the Brahminic literature a convenient and readymade tool for colonial domination. The position has not changed much since. The neatly laid-out hierarchical structure within which this elite operates, its clear emphasis on rules, procedures, and rituals, and its cor-



responding discounting of trust and confidence and spontaneity of action, its mastery of the routine of disposing the business of the State, and its strong sense of internal *esprit de corps* — all strike a deep psychological chord in the Indian personality and the social structure that sustains the internal norms of this personality

Nor are these characteristics limited to the structure of government, they have spread to other sectors and dominate the ethos of their functioning. The decision-making structure of modern economic enterprises (in both private and public sectors), the structure and rules by which our academic institutions are run, the operating rules and procedures of even our voluntary agencies, Academies and various scientific bodies and 'autonomous' councils and institutions, are all dominated by the bureaucratic ethos

When we add to this the fact that each of these institutions is continuously mediated by public administration, we are up against not just one major structure but a whole culture of management of the affairs of our society. It is necessary to bear in mind the pervasive character of this culture and its deep roots in our national psyche and character. Any attempt at changing the administrative system must bear this in mind

Nor are our problems and inadequacies limited to the administrative structure and the culture that it breeds and to our model of development and the system of education, all of these converging to vitiate the functioning of our democratic polity. The political-constitutional sphere has itself become prone to the same tendencies of centralisation, domination and inequity. Thus, both in respect of the ordering of our federal polity and in respect of the relationship obtaining between the centres of power and the vast peripheries of human communities (both regionally and socially), and indeed even in the structure of authority at the centre (e.g., in the relationships between the President, the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the Parliament), large distortions have set in

making in the hands of a few. But it has also led to ad hocism and unpredictability in politics. This breeds insecurity and leads to opportunistic and amoral behaviour at all levels of the polity. These are conditions that lead to institutional disorder, personal anomie, large-scale cynicism and a widespread search for escape from reality (as found in the growing disenchantment with party politics assuch and the search for a 'non-party' alternative)

Now, of course, it is also true that it is largely through the operation of the democratic political process that the centralizing tendencies inherent in a modernizing society can be arrested. Also, it is through institutional restructuring and relocation of power and resources that is inherent in the democratic process that disintegrative tendencies and anomic behaviour, also inherent in the process of modernization, can be arrested. This is precisely what took place in India throughout the fifties and the greater part of the sixties. Throughout this period it was through the indigenous political process that the debilitating consequences of an alien model of development and of colonial vestiges in the educational and administrative spheres were countered.<sup>4</sup>

Curiously, it is precisely during the period of mass awakening that followed this (starting sometime in 1967) that the capacity of the political process to deal with the centralizing as well as disorienting consequences of the modernization process weakened. This period has witnessed a series of historical mutations arising essentially out of the continuous operation and firm anchorage of the democratic political process, and leading to a major restructuring of the social framework of this ancient and highly structured and stylized civilization.<sup>5</sup>

Such a massive process of change seems to have eluded the conscious-

ness of large segments of the Indian elite which has been too busy trying to save and preserve elements of the old political order that may have been highly relevant and functional to a period of intra-elite permutations but was unable to withstand the rise of genuine mass politics.<sup>6</sup> Unable to anticipate this change and prepare for it, or even recognize it when it actually took place, the elites — political as well as other — have been found to be so totally inadequate that they seem already like fossils from the past, running hither and thither and indulging in all kinds of stupid (to them clever) games, including ideological games (à la socialism, secularism and stability). Unfortunately, the system that we gave to ourselves thirty years ago, and under which we still seem to be, has concentrated so much initiative, power and resources in the hands of these elites that their very disabilities become the nation's disabilities, their desperation leading to our desperation

Nothing short of squarely facing this *crisis of change*<sup>7</sup> and measuring up to it through institutional reordering in the political sphere and legal-constitutional relationships, rethinking on economic strategy and technological alternatives, revamping the educational system, and a sensitive response to the plurality of our social ecology, now deeply astir and clamouring for change, is what we face in the years ahead. From the social stirrings and institutional ruins of the seventies we must work towards a new national enterprise. This is a task that cannot be handled by politicians alone. Indeed, at the root of this crisis of change is the need for a new intellectual paradigm, guided by a vision and perspective that is sensitive to the historical mutations that this continental democracy has brought forth. It is to this new agenda that we must turn during the eighties.<sup>8</sup>

6 Sheth, *op cit*.

7 See Bashiruddin Ahmed, 'Crisis of Change', Seminar 242

8 See the document, 'An Agenda for India', published in this issue. For a detailed treatment of the issue areas raised in this article and policy recommendations on each, see my *Democratic Polity and Social Change in India: Challenge and Opportunities*, Allied Publishers, 1976

4 For a fully developed analysis of the interaction of alien and indigenous processes in the political system, see my 'The Crisis of the Representational System in Our Times', *Quest*, 98, November-December 1975

5 See D.L. Sheth, 'Politics of Caste Conflict', *Seminar*, 233, January 1979



# Background to a controversy

SATYA DEVA

THE nature of the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* has become a major political issue in India today. During the Emergency it was one of the main targets of attack. According to the Shah Commission over a lakh and ten thousand persons were detained under MISA or imprisoned under DISIR. More than 60 per cent of these, it is said, belonged to the RSS.<sup>1</sup> The underground work of RSS volunteers during the dark days of the Emergency earned the admiration of most of us. Even earlier, the RSS had cooperated with J.P.'s movement. Later also, its disciplined cadres became a pillar of strength for the Janata Party in fighting the historic elections of 1977. That is why when the Janata Party split, ostensibly on grounds of its links with the RSS, the Lok Dal was criticized for weakening the fight against authoritarianism. Even Acharya Kripalani said recently 'Granting but not admitting, as I have not studied the question, that the RSS is ridden with rabid communalism and the Janata Party is partner in that, the question is whether loss of democratic freedom is worse than communalism.'<sup>2</sup>

Acharya Kripalani's formulation may be all right so far as opposition to Indira Gandhi's authoritarianism is concerned. However, independently, it can be said to be valid only if the RSS itself is not authoritarian. A dispassionate examination may indicate that it suffers from both faults — those of sectarianism and authoritarianism. If we also find that it aims at the monopoly of power in a system of controlled capitalism, and that it considers violence and war as desirable, we must recognize it as a danger. Its disciplined cadres, also, may then

appear as potential instruments of regimentation.

A proper understanding of the nature of the RSS requires a study of the fundamentals of its doctrine. The most authoritative and comprehensive enunciation of this doctrine is to be found in the speeches and writings of Madhavrao Sadashivrao Golwalkar (Guruji), published posthumously in Hindi in seven volumes under the title *Samagra Darsana* (The Complete Philosophy).<sup>3</sup> Most of the speeches compiled here were delivered to RSS volunteers and as such constitute a repository of the ideas on which they have been brought up. His earlier books are *We or Our Nationhood Defined*<sup>4</sup> (1939) and *Bunch of Thoughts*<sup>5</sup> (1966).

Golwalkar may be said to be the chief architect of the RSS. He had left his job as a teacher of zoology at the Banaras Hindu University to work for the RSS and was nominated as its chief (*sarasanghachalaka*) by Dr Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, the founder, before the latter's death in 1940. Golwalkar himself died in 1973. It was during the 33 years of his leadership that the RSS acquired its all-India character. He is, therefore, generally considered to be its chief apostle. Of course, Dr. Hedgewar remains the fountainhead, a small compilation of his speeches in Hindi is available.<sup>6</sup>

Among other exponents, Deendayal Upadhyaya is important as an

1 Shah Commission of Inquiry, *Third and Final Report* (New Delhi: Controller of Publications, 1978), pp. 39-134, L. K. Advani, 'In Defence of the RSS', *Illustrated Weekly of India*, Oct. 7-13, 1979, p. 8.

2 J. B. Kripalani, 'Avoiding Mutual Recriminations', *Indian Express*, Chandigarh, Sept. 24, 1979, p. 6.

3 Sri Guruji, *Samagra Darsana* (Nagpur: Bharatiya Vichar Sadhana, n.d.) Extracts have been translated by the author.

4 M. S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (Nagpur: Bharat Prakashan, 1939).

5 M. S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts* (Bangalore: Vikram Prakashana, 1966).

6 Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Tatva aur Vyavahara* (Lucknow: Rashtradharm Pustak Prakashan, 2029 Vikrama). Extracts have been translated by the author.



editor of RSS-Jan Sangh magazines, Atal Behari Vajpayee as a former *pracharak*, and Balasaheb Deoras as the present chief

**T**he RSS was born at Nagpur in 1925 as a response to Hindu-Muslim tension.<sup>7</sup> There had been widespread Hindu-Muslim riots during the previous year. The Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha were leading the movement for *shuddhi* (conversion), the Muslim League and other Muslim leaders for *tanzim* (organization) and *tabligh* (propaganda). Thus while there were leaders who saw the solution to the riots in Hindu-Muslim unity, there were others who thought that the remedy lay in organizing their particular religious groups.

Dr. Hedgewar, a physician and a member of the Hindu Mahasabha, was a proponent of Hindu unity. He was associated with V D Savarkar, Dr B S Moonje and other Maharashtra Brahman leaders. Through the RSS he sought to organize Hindus into disciplined and armed bands in every city and town. He perceived military drill and training in the use of arms (lathis, swords and javelins) as stepping stones 'some people consider these to be the goal of the RSS, but this is their misunderstanding'. The objective of the Sangh is to gather strength for defending our religion and our nation — this is known (even) to Sangh children.<sup>8</sup>

Defending the preparation for violence he said 'This strength is called brute strength by some people. But I cannot understand how the sacred strength which is used for the defence of religion and well-being can be called brute strength. Actually this strength is as sacred and noble as spiritual strength'.<sup>9</sup>

The only declared goal of the RSS has been 'Hindu unity'.<sup>10</sup> Its occasional social service activities are not

a part of its programme, but merely of its strategy. In a speech delivered in the seventies, Golwalkar discussed the issue. 'The question is', he asked, 'why have we not adopted these (social service) activities as our goal in the RSS? Why have we accepted only unity as our goal?'<sup>11</sup> He answered the question by relating Dr Hedgewar's remarks regarding an orphanage. Dr Hedgewar had told its organizers that in his view while social service activities were like treating boils one by one, working for Hindu unity was like purifying the blood. Hence, says Golwalkar, Dr Hedgewar had concluded: 'We have to do nothing except this'.

Thus, while the RSS has recently performed commendable social service activities during crises such as a flood or a cyclone, these do not constitute an integral part of its role as conceived by itself. This is also indicated by the fact that its volunteers do not receive the training in knowledge, skills and attitudes which would fit them for social work.

**D**r Hedgewar used to describe RSS work as 'God's work'.<sup>12</sup> The daily activity of every *shakha* (branch) begins with a prayer to God and the Hindu Nation, and a salute to the *Bhagava Dhwaj* (saffron flag) which is referred to as the *guru*. The speeches of RSS leaders are interspersed with quotations from Hindu scriptures and legends, from mythology. Such religious symbols and rituals play upon the emotions and are helpful in inculcating unquestioning faith.

For obtaining total devotion, particularly of the more highly educated sections of the urban middle class, however, an ideology was apparently required. The philosophy of *vedanta* as presented in the *Bhagavad Gita*, and as elaborated in its activist form by Swami Vivekananda, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and V D Savarkar, was utilized for this purpose. The argument of *vedanta* may be summarised as follows: the reality is *Brahma*, we can become one with it and attain salvation through know-

ledge and non-attachment; knowledge consists in seeing the oneness of all beings; action performed in the spirit of non-attachment can be no sin. Golwalkar used this cosmic vision to justify radical Hindu nationalism, totalitarianism, dictatorship and violence. For this purpose he equated the Hindu Nation with *Brahma*, the achievement of Hindu unity with *Moksha*, and the dictator with the unattached saint who can indulge in violence without sinning.

Said Golwalkar 'The first and the most fundamental aspect is the urge for realisation of the Supreme Reality. People go to temples. But all this does not satisfy us. We want a "living" God which will engross us in activity. Our forefathers therefore said, "Our people is our God"'. The Hindu people, they said, is the *Virat Purusha*, the Almighty manifesting Himself'.<sup>13</sup>

Of course, the question remains why non-Hindus are excluded if *vedanta* postulates the oneness of all living beings.

**H**aving thus equated the Hindu people with *Brahma*, he proceeded to justify totalitarianism, the individual must merge himself into the totality of the nation. 'Shankaracharya called in *nityanityavastuviveka*. Let us apply it to our national life. Individuals come and go. Countless generations have come and gone. But the nation has remained. The "permanent", therefore, is the national life. The "impermanent" is the individual. The ideal arrangement would therefore be to transform the impermanent — the individual — into a means to attain the permanent — the social good — which would at the same time enable the individual to enrich and bring to blossom his latent divinity. This is *dharma* in its twofold aspect, which leads mankind to its ultimate goal of Realisation of Godhead — *moksha*'.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, he justified dictatorship and violence. 'Today (there are) people who do not care for human goodness due to headiness of power,

7 Prabhakar Balvant Dani, *Sangh Darśana* (Lucknow Lokahita Prakasana, 2035 Vikrama), p. 21

8 Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, *op. cit.*, p. 20

9 *Ibid.*, p. 21

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 10 ff

11 Sri Gururaj, *Samagra Darsana*, Vol VI, pp. 7-9

12 Keshav Baliram Hedgewar *op. cit.*, p. 30

13 M S Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, p. 24

14 *Ibid.*, p. 36



and greed of wealth and sex, no purpose would be served by telling or explaining our principles to such most impudent people. The use of force may be needed to make them follow our principles. Sometimes there is a need to pull ears also. But who will pull ears? He, who has both explicit and internal capacity. He alone, who has good qualities and spiritual wealth, can influence people, can control them due to his self-realisation.<sup>15</sup>

The equation of RSS work with God's work and the appeal to spirituality lead many Hindus to believe that RSS leaders speak the authentic voice of Hinduism. Hence it is worth noting briefly that such appeals are not unique. Thus Mussolini described fascism as 'a religious conception in which man is seen in his immanent relationship with a superior law and with an objective will that transcends the particular individual and raises him to conscious membership of a spiritual society'.<sup>16</sup> Hitler also said, 'What is important for the earth's future is to see to it that *God's will is not simply talked about outwardly, but that God's will is also fulfilled*'.<sup>17</sup>

It has often been asserted recently that the RSS is a cultural, and not a political, organisation. Hence it is important to examine its concept of culture. One way to approach it is to consider its symbols. Thus, the heroes it constantly puts forward are Shivaji, Maharana Pratap and Guru Gobind Singh. They were military leaders who fought to the last against 'Muslim' emperors, hence they symbolize Hindu armed might against Muslims. Another symbol is the *Bhagawa Dhwa*. It symbolises Hindu imperialism.

Golwalkar quotes a letter written to the Peshwa congratulating him for

having carried his 'victorious sword' right up to Kabul: 'I am so very happy that the *Bhagawa Dhwa* has crossed the Sindhu once again, that all Muslim power has been shattered.'

<sup>18</sup> The RSS conception of the Hindu empire is as follows. 'Our epics and our *puranas* also present us with the same expansive image. Afghanistan was our ancient *Upaganasthan*.

Even Iran was originally *Aryan*. Burma is our ancient *Brahma*. *Lanka* was never different from the mainland.'<sup>19</sup> One of the festivals of the RSS is the Hindu Empire Day, when this conception is repeated with nostalgia. Glorification of the use of force, both internally and externally, is thus at the focus of the RSS concept of culture.

Another way to approach the RSS concept of culture is to examine its attitudes toward prominent cultural movements such as those of Buddhism and Gandhism. Golwalkar makes a short survey of Indian history in *We or Our Nationhood Defined*. Here he says that Buddhism, 'had the painful effect of effacing from the minds of the masses their tenacious adherence to their faith. Over-individualization in the field of religion followed and the consequence was that the individual became more prominent than the society, the Nation. For those whom the true spirit of religion did not touch intensely, this was another name for self-seeking, even at the cost of the welfare of the whole'.<sup>20</sup> Golwalkar thus sees Buddhism as having two deleterious consequences, he does not mention any benefits. We may note in passing that the perception of over-individualization is indicative of a totalitarian conception of society.

Coming now to Gandhism, we find that the RSS is critical of most of its important principles: Hindu-Muslim unity, peace and non-violence, the purity of means and the theory of trusteeship. The last we shall take up later.

<sup>18</sup> M S Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, p 163.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, pp 82-83.

<sup>20</sup> M S Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, p 14.

We give below brief excerpts from Golwalkar's comments on the other three principles.

#### *Hindu-Muslim Unity*

'Those who declared "No *swaraj* without Hindu-Muslim unity" have thus perpetrated the greatest treason on our society. They have committed the most heinous sin of killing the life spirit of a great and ancient people. To preach impotency to a society which gave rise to a Shivaji, has no parallel in the history of the world for sheer magnitude of its betrayal'.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Peace and Non-Violence*

'A dense cloud of dust is raised in the form of high sounding words like "peace" and "non-violence" with an assumed air of moral authority only to cover up our imbecility'.<sup>22</sup>

#### *Ends and Means*

'This is the unique feature of Sangh work, wherein the "means" and the "end" have coalesced. The "end", i.e., the ideal of an organized society, has made this organization invincible and ever-expanding'.<sup>23</sup>

Everything must be sacrificed at the altar of 'the end'. Thus, Dr Hedgewar specifically raises the question as to a volunteer's duty in case of a conflict between his responsibility toward his parents and his work in the RSS. His clear answer is that 'the setting aside of such an obstacle to RSS work is our duty as a *swayamsevak*'.<sup>24</sup>

This short examination of RSS attitudes toward Buddhism and Gandhism indicates that it finds almost nothing of value in these — that their light is unable to pierce its cloud of totalitarianism.

<sup>15</sup> Sri Gururji, *Samagya Darsana*, Vol VI, p 178.

<sup>16</sup> Benito Mussolini, 'The Doctrine of Fascism' in Michael Oakshott (ed.), *The Social and Political Doctrines of Contemporary Europe* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1947), p 165.

<sup>17</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (English translation) (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1939), p 827. Hitler's emphasis.

<sup>21</sup> M S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, p 152.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p 249.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p 222.

<sup>24</sup> Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, *op. cit.*, pp 36-37.



In recent articles, Atal Behari Vajpayee,<sup>25</sup> L. K. Advani<sup>26</sup> and Subramaniam Swamy<sup>27</sup> have compared the RSS with the Arya Samaj. The comparison originated in an effort to justify 'dual membership' of the Janata Party and the RSS. We have been reminded that the Arya Samaj supported *shuddhi* but its membership did not become a bar to that of secular parties. Why should, then, the RSS objective of Hindu unity become a bar to such dual membership? Our object here is not to take sides in this dispute but merely to see how far the comparison between the Arya Samaj and the RSS is justified so as to get at a better understanding.

The Arya Samaj started as a movement for the reform of the old Hindu faith and social system. It repudiated scriptures other than the *samhita* part of the *Vedas*, the multiplicity of gods, and the worship of their images, their incarnation, various rituals such as Ganga bathing and *shraddha*, and aspects of social structure such as caste (*varna*) based on birth. If it propounded the conversion of non-Hindus into Hinduism, it pursued with at least equal vigour the conversion of Hindus themselves into its particular reformed faith. Entry into the Arya Samaj was once considered to be a rebellious act for a Hindu. Hence it is a reformatory sect, a Hindu church properly so-called, a movement for social reform.

The RSS by contrast is not a sect, it aims at uniting all Hindus. Nor is it a church, aiming at propagating a faith. It is also not a movement for social reform. On the other hand, if unity makes for power and if power may be the aim of politics, it cannot be denied that uniting people may be a political activity. This applies to the RSS also. In so far as it attempts to unite Hindus into a powerful national State, it is political in character, its laudable role in fighting the Emergency was also, after all, political.

The RSS definition of a nation requires five unities: geographical, racial, religious, cultural and linguistic — 'the loss or destruction of any one of these means the end of the Nation as a Nation'.<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, Hindus are seen as constituting not merely a religious but also a racial group — the 'Aryan race'.<sup>29</sup> Also, Golwalkar describes Islam and Christianity as 'semitic religions'.<sup>30</sup> The implication is obvious: people of these religions should be treated like Jews in Germany. Golwalkar is explicit, 'Germany has also shown how well nigh impossible it is for Races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan to learn and profit by'.<sup>31</sup>

The above was written by Golwalkar in 1938; he kept up the identification of Hindus as a racial as well as a religious group in his later works. 'That race spirit which has survived all the shocks of centuries of aggression and has time and again thrown up great spiritual and national heroes is bound to reassert itself'.<sup>32</sup>

The problems of identifying race with religion are sought to be solved by claiming uniqueness for Hindus. 'Let us all remember that this Unity is ingrained in our blood from our very birth, because we are all born as Hindus. Some wise men of today tell us that no man is born as Hindu or Muslim or Christian but as a simple human being. This may be true about others. But for a Hindu, he gets the first *sanskara* when he is still in the mother's womb. We are therefore born as Hindus'.<sup>33</sup>

28 M. S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, p. 40.

29 *Ibid*, p. 10.

30 M. S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, p. 103.

31 M. S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, p. 43.

32 M. S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, p. 75.

33 *Ibid*, pp. 118-19.

According to this view non-Hindus, because of their religious, racial and cultural differences, can never be nationals of 'Hindusthan', the Hindu national State. 'the non-Hindu peoples in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but that of glorification of the Hindu race and culture or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment — not even citizen's rights'.<sup>34</sup>

Since independence, Muslims have been perceived by the RSS as being not merely outside the national stream but as enemies of the nation — as being in league with Pakistan. 'Right from Delhi to Rampur and Lucknow the Muslims are busy hatching a dangerous plot, piling up arms and mobilising their men and probably biding their time to strike from within when Pakistan decides upon an armed conflict with our country'.<sup>35</sup>

The attitude toward Christians is less hostile; there are no Hindu-Christian riots. However, Christians are perceived as aiming at the conversion of Hindus. The charitable activities of missionaries are seen as a cover for the 'claw' of proselytising activities. 'So long as the Christians here indulge in such activities, and consider themselves as agents of the international movement for the spread of Christianity, and refuse to offer their first loyalty to the land of their birth and behave as true children of the heritage and culture of their ancestors, they will remain here as hostiles and will have to be treated as such'.<sup>36</sup>

In this perspective, what purpose would be served by an announce-

25 Atal Behari Vajpayee, 'All Responsible for Janata Crisis', *Indian Express*, August 2, 1979, p. 6.

26 L. K. Advani, *loc cit*.

27 Subramaniam Swamy, 'The RSS is Here to Stay', *Illustrated Weekly of India*, Oct. 7-13, pp. 11-13.

34 M. S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, pp. 55-56.

35 M. S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, pp. 171-72.

36 *Ibid*, p. 186.



ment by the RSS 'that by "Hindu *Rashtra*" it means the Indian nation which includes non-Hindus as equal members', as suggested by Atal Behari Vajpayee? It is not likely to convince the non-Hindus who may find the contradiction in terms a bit too glaring 'Hindu' includes 'non-Hindu'

Another suggestion is to substitute *Bharat* for 'Hindu' Subramaniam Swamy refers to it. However, this is an old idea and was considered by Guruji, who opined that *Bharat*, Hindu *Rashtra* and the ancient Hindu Empire were one and the same Balasaheb Deoras also says that 'Hindu *Rashtra*' and 'Bharat *Rashtra*' are synonymous and interchangeable,<sup>37</sup> which shows that the doctrine has not changed

It would be surprising if any responsible leader today considered war to be desirable after what happened in the two world wars and those following them. However, Golwalkar does just that. He wishes that there had been total war between India and China 'Such a total war, unlike the present limited one would have been a great chastener of the national mind Vices would have been completely burnt in the fire of a long-drawn war and the pure gold of a united and heroic nationhood would have emerged even more resplendent.'<sup>38</sup>

Golwalkar expresses the wish that peace should not have been made in the Kashmir war with Pakistan and that Indian troops should have occupied most of Pakistan. What is more, he is prepared to start a war with Pakistan for no offence at all but merely to undo it 'If partition is a settled fact we are here to unsettle it'<sup>39</sup>

**T**he RSS is opposed to democracy in theory as well as practice Golwalkar has criticized it repeatedly and at length. He maintains that democracy is merely a 'reaction' to feudalism. According to him the values of liberty, fraternity and equ-

ality which informed the French Revolution, and are now enshrined in our Constitution, are hollow. Everyone's liberty is limited by that of others, hence, according to him, true liberty can be had only in *moksha* it is unattainable in this world. Therefore, the principle of liberty is 'wrong'.<sup>40</sup>

Fraternity also is 'meaningless' for those who do not know that the same supreme Reality is present in each one of us. Equality is to be found nowhere at all in the world all plants and human beings differ from each other. He thus rejects all the three principles Golwalkar said all this in 1972, less than three years later many of his followers were lamenting the loss of their liberty, which they had been taught to consider hollow

**T**here is no place for the individual or his rights in the RSS doctrine. Even within the organization every volunteer is supposed to have lost his individuality. Dr Hedgewar said, 'The individual loses his independent individuality on coming into the Sangh'.<sup>41</sup> Golwalkar even maintains that the conception of rights is non-existent in Hindu thought.<sup>42</sup> The word *adhikar* according to him does not mean right, but duty, this because every capability imposes a responsibility. He is apparently unaware that the latter idea is found in western thought also. Plato's conception of justice is comparable to the Sanskrit *dharma*, in which capability is equated with duty. Hence some rights may be derived from duties. Thus, a policeman must have the right to stop vehicles to fulfil the duty of regulating traffic. However, on this ground to deny rights which do not derive from duties, is to treat man merely as a means, and not as an end in himself. What duty is fulfilled by the enjoyment of the beauty of a sunset? If none, should the right to do so be abrogated? How ready a justification this doctrine would be for the

abrogation of our Fundamental Rights by a future dictator!

Arguments, at various levels, have been piled up by RSS spokesmen against democracy. It is criticized at the religious level for leading to the 'sins' of self-praise and fault-finding during election campaigns.<sup>43</sup> More mundane shortcomings are said to be the promotion of particular interests, divisive pressures such as those for cultural or linguistic autonomy, group rivalries, the 'appeasement' of minorities, such as Muslims, for the sake of their votes, inability of uneducated voters to choose capable representatives, and lack of competence among amateur ministers.<sup>44</sup>

Golwalkar makes it amply clear that the RSS would prefer more power in the hands of a well-trained bureaucracy, while it is now generally recognised that the bureaucracies of under-developed countries like India are already very powerful, giving them more power would lead to 'negative development' and the weakening of democracy.<sup>45</sup>

**T**he rejection of democracy in practice is apparent in the organization and working of the RSS. Even under the RSS constitution of 1949 (Art. 12) the *sarasanghachalaka* is to be nominated by his predecessor, with the consent of the national executive which itself is a nominated body. Other officials are also nominated, although in name they may be elected. All officials are evaluated on the basis of their work, such as the number of persons motivated by them to join the Sangh. Selection and promotion is made on the basis of such criteria. After a selection has been made, or a course of action has been decided upon, it is given formal shape as the result of an election or a committee's resolution. Provisions for democratic procedures were introduced into the RSS constitution under governmental pressure, the hope that a

37 Balasaheb Deoras, statement in an interview, *Organiser*, Oct. 7, 1979, p. 2

38 M. S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, pp. 311-12

39 *Ibid.*, p. 93

40 Sri Guruji, *Samagra Darsana*, Vol. VII, p. 91

41 Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, *op cit.*, p. 26

42 Sri Guruji, *Samagra Darsana*, Vol. VI, p. 83

43 *Ibid.*, p. 99

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 127-28

45 Fred W. Riggs, *Administration in Developing Countries* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964), pp. 227 ff

46 Rajendra Singh, statement in an interview, *Organiser*, Jan. 28, 1979, p. 3



rigidly hierarchical organization, whose volunteers had internalized the norms of an armed force, could be made democratic through provisions in its constitution has proved to be false

**T**he Constitution of India is quasi-federal with a strong Union. Federalism had been envisaged during the freedom movement itself. This was in recognition of the autonomy of India's several cultures whose vehicles are their particular languages. According to this conception India's culture is a unity in diversity, for, what is Indian literature, for instance, except the literature of Tamil, Bengali, Marathi, Urdu, Hindi and so on? A federation with linguistic States embodies this unity in diversity. However, autonomy of every kind is reprehensible to the RSS, it perceives plurality as nothing but 'falling to pieces' and 'destruction'

Golwalkar gave the call (which continues to be repeated, for example by Rajendra Singh, the RSS General Secretary, on Republic Day, (1979) for the abrogation of federalism, as follows 'Let the Constitution be re-examined and re-drafted, so as to establish this Unitary form of Government and thus effectively disprove... "ethnic groups" or "nationalities"'. Let our present leaders .. with a firm hand, change the present ill-conceived federal structure. '47 In other words, cultural autonomy must be sacrificed at the altar of national unification and glory

The RSS openly supports the caste (*varna*) system in its original form. Golwalkar maintains that there is nothing wrong in caste being based on birth, since the *varna* of one's birth is dependent upon the deeds of one's past life. Thus he repeats the argument which has been used for centuries for the exploitation of the lowly Hindu reformers like Swami Dayananda revolted against it a century ago, the RSS however upholds the traditional religious-cum-social system. *Vedanta* is again put to use. Golwalkar says that according to *anasakti yoga* everyone should act

without the longing for results. Hence action should be according to one's station in life, individual choice has no place in the 'Hindu system'. In reply to a question relating to the desirability of social change he says, 'How can change be acceptable in elements of belief that are fundamental and required for stability?'48 Support for the *status quo* is, thus, explicit, not implicit

RSS leaders denounce untouchability in principle, still, they criticize the movement relating to its abolition for sharpening conflict. Golwalkar says that the provisions against its practice in the Constitution of India, and Mahatma Gandhi's efforts in that direction, had both accentuated it, and had also led to 'disintegration'.49 He criticizes the demand for the fulfilment of the 'rights and privileges' of the untouchables on the ground that such demands result in attacks on 'religion', 'culture' and 'heroes'

The leaders of the RSS claim that untouchability is not being practised in its *shakhas*. This is true; but so is it true that it is no longer being observed in India's trains, buses and hospitals. It is not enough today to denounce untouchability, nor even to abjure its practice, what is needed is a will and a programme to uplift the members of the scheduled castes, most of whom are landless labourers, economically, educationally and socially. The RSS has no such programme

**T**he RSS is intensely opposed to socialism. Marxian socialism is criticized by it for being foreign, materialistic and violent. Gandhian socialism, which by contrast is indigenous, idealistic and non-violent, is rejected as being impracticable. Indeed, the RSS rejects the very ideal of equality which may be said to be basic to socialism, hence socialism as such is unacceptable to it

Materialism, it is said, is the common fault of western thought and sullies both democracy and socialism

According to Golwalkar's interpretation of western thought 'equality of man was propounded on the material plane because all men were equally in need of all these basic material needs'.50 Apparently he is unaware of the ideal of treating every man as an end in himself in modern western thought

Golwalkar criticizes Mahatma Gandhi's theory of trusteeship on the ground that it is unworkable.51 Interestingly enough, here he emphasizes the primacy of material incentives for providing motivation. In this context, he criticizes high rates of taxation as reducing the motivation to work. He criticises collective farming and points out that it had to be replaced by individual ownership even in the U.S.S.R. to increase productivity. He does not realize that he is contradicting himself in criticising the ideal of equality as too materialistic, and that of trusteeship as too idealistic

**T**he next contradiction is even more interesting. Golwalkar is critical of competition also. 'Some people say that healthy competition leads to progress. However, to me it seems that this thing called competition is never healthy. The "permissiveness" and "competition" prevalent in western countries cannot possibly lead to human happiness.'52 In so far as competition is the essence of free enterprise, Golwalkar, by implication, criticizes free enterprise. At another place he is more explicit. He says 'This much is clear, that in the area of the means of production there cannot be licence. In the name of the so-called freedom of the individual it cannot be permitted that whoever may earn and consume in whatever way he likes'.53 Thus Golwalkar is critical of free enterprise as well as socialism. What then does he support?

He proposes a *via media* between State capitalism and individual ownership, with a fine balance bet-

50 M S Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, p 16

51 Sri Gururji, *Samagra Darsana*, Vol VI, p 132

52 *Ibid*, p 121

53 *Ibid*, p 133

48 Sri Gururji, *Samagra Darsana*, Vol V, pp 142-43

49 Sri Gururji, *Samagra Darsana*, Vol. VI p 192

47 M S Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, pp 437-38



ween the two<sup>54</sup> The crux of the problem, according to him, consists in the need for virtuous men to run such a system 'The only solution to all problems' lies in 'the production of such workers' And, 'it can be done only in the *shakhas*' . 'This has been our vision of *shakhas* from the beginning' His solution, then, lies in a kind of controlled capitalism with the monopoly of power in the hands of 'the virtuous' RSS men, as if the traders who join the RSS cease to indulge in black-marketing and hoarding!

In the meanwhile, measures and proposals having a socialistic bias are criticized Golwalkar condemns labour unions and their agitations as leading to work stoppages, greater poverty, discontent and instability, and as helping to re-impose foreign rule in India<sup>55</sup> At the same time, tears are shed by Deendayal Upadhyaya for the clerk and the teacher being left with 'no savings, no status'<sup>56</sup> The latter also criticizes 'the megalomania of planning in a big way'<sup>57</sup> Of cooperative farming he says: 'when you come down to brass tacks, you have no alternative but to give up the whole programme'<sup>58</sup>

**A**tal Behari Vajpayee has recently proclaimed. 'Apprehensions about the RSS aiming at capturing political power are without foundation Its very character, its composition, the social strata from which it draws its cadre, its day to day activities are such that it cannot mobilise support...'<sup>59</sup>

The fact, however, remains that the Jana Sangh, which arose from the RSS, did accept political power, and formed governments in a number of States, and also at the Centre as part of the Janata Party

So far as the activities of the RSS are concerned, we should examine

these at two levels At the micro level we should see how the activities in the *shakha* aim at moulding the personality of the *swayamasevak*, often from childhood onwards Gururji says

'The Sangh has therefore evolved a course of *samskars* wherein the mind, intellect and body of an individual are trained The training that is given everyday in the *shakha* in a strictly regulated fashion imparts that spirit of identification and well concerted action ..The persons assembled there learn to obey a single command Discipline enters their blood, More important than the discipline of the body is the discipline of the mind They learn to direct their individual emotions and impulses towards the great national cause'<sup>60</sup> (*The Man-Making Process*)

At the macro level, it is worth noting that the RSS now has about 13,000 *shakhas*,<sup>61</sup> with *swayamsevak*s numbering about a million and a quarter,<sup>62</sup> and an annual income of about 30 million rupees There is a well-trained, dedicated and whole-time all-India cadre of some 2,000 *pracharaks*. They start new *shakhas*, supervise and coordinate their work and hold training camps.

Apart from the *shakha* structure, there are now some 53 other fronts of the RSS — organizations to muster support among interests as diverse as traders, teachers, writers, lawyers, physicians, women, students, industrial labour, farmers, fishermen and primitive tribes. Eight daily newspapers, 40 weekly magazines and several book publishing organizations have been established to disseminate its views. It even had a news agency of its own As Vajpayee acknowledges, such mobilization of pressure groups and mass media does not tally with its disclaimer of political ambitions.

As regards objectives, we have noted above the RSS conception of the desirable politico-economic system — capitalism, controlled and regulated by a cadre of 'virtuous' men The RSS perceives itself to be the only organization which is working to bring about such a system and to produce the cadre to run it. After emphasizing the need for a virtuous cadre for running the system Gururji says: 'It acquires great importance in every situation and system to educate the people in general and to prepare the social situation for keeping the competent men chosen by them engaged in works of national welfare. Is this work, of such great importance, being done anywhere in our country?' If not, who will do it? It must be asserted that nobody except our Sangh is doing it with such widespread intensity . '<sup>63</sup>

Gururji obviously has in view here a political role Indeed, he would be the last person to distinguish among political, cultural and religious roles, since he believes in *dharmasatta*.

Vajpayee also mentions the factors of 'composition' and 'social strata'. It is commonly agreed that the majority of RSS volunteers come from the urban lower-middle class, although every effort is made to draw together persons from all strata. It is a lesson of history that the lower-middle class supports totalitarian movements of the Right in times of crisis when it fears being declassed, as happened in Italy and Germany.<sup>64</sup> The conditions in India today may be seen as, leading to such a crisis: fast growing inflation, rising unemployment and poverty, widespread corruption and governmental instability. Gururji was conscious that this was fertile soil for the RSS coming to power 'This downfall will ultimately reach a state of chaos; then the RSS alone will be useful. In the most dreadful situation, when all ethical, religious, spiritual values have been lost, the RSS alone will keep the dying sparks alive'.<sup>65</sup>

54. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97

56. Deendayal Upadhyaya, *Political Diary* (Bombay. Jaico Publishing House, 1968), p. 5

57. *Ibid.*, p. 1

58. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

59. Atal Behari Vajpayee, *loc cit.*

60. M.S Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, p. 352

61. Balasaheb Deoras, statement in an interview. *Organiser*, April 8, 1979, p. 29.

62. It is estimated by RSS leaders that for playing its 'proper role' it should have a membership of one per cent of the rural and three per cent of the urban population in its fold (Personal communication from Deendayal Upadhyaya).

63. Sri Gururji, *Samagra Darsana*, Vol. VI, p. 135.

64. For a socio-psychological explanation of this behaviour see Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1941)

65. Sri Gururji, *Samagra Darsana*, Vol. VII, p. 43.



# Minority perspectives

ALOO J DASTUR

ONE of the lessons history has attempted to teach and which we have resisted learning is that our fissiparous tendencies have been our undoing on several occasions. For the first time in a long period India can call her soul her own. True, we preferred political and economic freedom to territorial integrity. Let us not play the ostrich but recognise that a divided but free India was what we chose. Barring one noble exception — Mahatma Gandhi —

India's leadership accepted the partition. We need to recall this because quite often we are apt to blame the third party, the British, for the partition. The partition plan was suggested by the Muslim League, the British Government concurred and the Indian National Congress accepted it. It must be acknowledged that the Congress then was the national movement, nay more, it was identified with Indian nationalism. Against this backdrop, Jawaharlal Nehru's



great oration, tryst with destiny,  
fits in beautifully

The partition of the country came off because the efforts at Hindu-Muslim unity which Gandhi termed 'the breath of our life' failed. The major cause of this failure was the quantum of share in the distribution of the loaves and fishes of office, both governmental and ministerial. The Montague Declaration of 20 August, 1917, came to be hesitantly translated into the India Councils Act of 1919 introducing 'reserved' and 'transferred' subjects, the latter to be headed by elected Indians. This 'Indianisation' was widened with the introduction of Provincial Autonomy, partial as it was, by the Government of India Act of 1935. This expanding base of participation in political office triggered off a variety of attitudes and approaches. While the Congress favoured acceptance of office, Gandhi and the socialists opposed it. While the Muslim League desired acceptance of office, it discovered that office eluded it consequent on the elections of 1937. The Muslim majority provinces returned other Muslim parties to power, in the rest of the country where the Congress won decisive majorities it chose to form united or composite ministries. Thus arose the strident cry of the two-nation theory.

The cry became a reality on August 15, 1947 and the euphoria of independence soon came to be tempered by the trauma of partition. The new country, Pakistan, emerged as the State of the Muslims, but India with its hoary traditions continued with her rich variety of regions, and cultures, her multiplicity of races and religions, her plurality of customs and languages. There was no doubt about it — it was not the land of the Hindus.

Even while the Constituent Assembly sought to knit the Indian Union into a more composite whole politically and constitutionally, it recognised social and religious divisions and disparities. The Minorities Committee headed by Sardar Patel, after heavy going, rejected separate electorates but recognised minority rights, particularly the right to free-

dom of religion and cultural and educational rights. In no other constitution perhaps have the minorities had it so good as in ours.

The United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities defines minorities as 'only those non-dominant groups in a population which possess and wish to preserve a stable, ethnic, religious or linguistic tradition, or characteristics markedly different from those of the rest of the population.. a minority must include a number of persons sufficient by themselves to develop these characteristics and its members must be loyal to the country of which they may be nationals'.

India has its fair share of minorities. It is only natural and to be expected that in a big country like ours with such a large population there will be many differences, dissimilarities and distinguishing characters amongst its people. This should not imply that, therefore, these necessarily make for divisions and separateness among them. Rather, they should contribute towards producing a rich and variegated design for living. It is a fact that this has not happened.

What are the factors that have kept our people away from each other? Religion and religious practices, language and its ramifications, caste and social stratification. The first two should normally make for better understanding and communication, on the contrary, with us they have led to conflicts and conflict situations and these have continued right into the present day — 32 years after independence.

One of the major problems we have to identify is what we miscall the communal problem. At its crudest, communalism is the persistent antagonism between Hindus and Muslims. One need not go into the history of communal strife in the country, which was climaxed by the partition in 1947. The irony of this is that those who had clamoured for it as being a minority in the Hindu majority administrative units were left where they were, and those like the Bengalis, Punjabis, Sindhis and

Pathans who did not work for it found themselves in the new State of Pakistan. But Indians continued then to have 32 crores of Muslims as its citizens. They watched with dismay as those they had trusted as their leaders deserted them for pastures new in the neighbouring country. The rump that was left behind did not measure up to lead in the changed circumstances. It continued to move in the narrow murky grove of Muslim separatism.

In the last three decades we have had communal orgies that make us hang our heads in shame. One strange practice is that some of these have occurred at the time of religious festivals. Among responsible people this should be considered reprehensible. Religion or religious factors are the base for such anti-social behaviour. But today the operative causes seem to be non-religious. Generally speaking the Muslims have cultivated a psychology of persecution and discrimination. Legally, under the Constitution they suffer no disadvantage. On the contrary the Constitution guarantees to the minorities the fullest protection of their religious practices and social customs and discrimination on grounds of religion, race or sex is prohibited.

With independence and possibly Nehru's commitment to secularism in practice they sought their political base in the Congress Party. The naive belief was that since that was the ruling party their interests would be better safeguarded. The country offered a wider choice for political participation from the extreme conservative Right to the extreme Left, but with few exceptions they preferred to maintain a distinct group identity for political purposes, and it is here that they ceased to be an active and effective force in the country.

Today things have changed. One feels that so far as Muslims are concerned we are back to the days of the British who used them as a lever against the growth of nationalism. Disillusioned with the Congress they moved away from the Congress during and immediately after the Emergency. They were more moved,



according to their statements, by the Emergency excesses of forcing family planning and compulsory sterilisation, and less so by the other excesses like imprisonment or torture. They have today recognised once again as in pre-independent India their political leverage. Every political party is wooing the Muslims as Muslims in the current electoral battle. Does this bid good for the future of the country?

**P**olitical parties are not trying to educate the minorities, specially such a large minority as Muslims, in their policies and principles but are pandering to communal considerations. Party leaders deliberately forget their past preferences and are offering the Muslims whatever they want. Muslim demands are mainly three in number. The first is the status and encouragement to Urdu. None can possibly quarrel with this legitimate aspiration, because Urdu is not only a beautiful but a great language of the country which has enriched our literature and culture. The misfortune is that it has come to be identified with a religious group which is not borne out by history. It is the language of people living in particular regions of the country.

The second demand they put up is to 'restore' to Aligarh Muslim University its minority character. This has become, for political purposes, a very potent irritant amongst the Muslims. Even in far flung Kerala they demand this even though they say they are not interested in sending their wards to this institution. Their sensitivity on the issue of AMU is a politically created sensitivity. Since the Supreme Court judgment stands in the way, the legal remedy other than the purely political one can also be found and there is no reason why the Supreme Court may not be approached once again to revise its earlier decision.

The third demand put forth is that the law of the Shariat should not be touched at all. This goes directly against one of the directive principles of State policy. During the Emergency much was made of the directive principles, it was even asserted that they were more basic to our national well-being than fundamental

rights. Even then we did not muster courage enough to introduce a uniform Civil Code. The student call by Muslim men for preserving the law of the Shariat has not enabled the powers that be and political leadership to hear the wails of Muslim women who are the worst sufferers under the dispensation. Educated Muslim women have started talking publicly against both polygamy and *talak*, touched as they are by their awareness of the rights of women. The Muslim Satya Sodhak Mandal in Maharashtra and the Muslim Women's Association in Kerala are working towards a uniform civil code. The movement is in a low key but is bound to gather momentum. In this context it is well to recall the words of Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan 'Ask them (Muslims) to leave anything and they would say it was sanctioned in Islam, ask them to learn anything, they would say it was prohibited by Islam'.

**M**uslim leadership must cultivate the courage to instil new ideas and chart new paths. This task will become all the more difficult against the incoming tide of Islamic fundamentalism. But let us remember only dead fish float with the tide. The unlettered women have also started talking about this amongst themselves not from any philosophical or social consideration but essentially from their very sad personal experiences of ill-treatment within the family. And yet every political party with an eye on Muslim votes as such panders to obscurantism. The Hindu woman came into her own in the mid-fifties with changes in Hindu law. Jawaharlal Nehru fought against Hindu obscurantism and one of the most potent arguments he put forward was that the honour and dignity of the Hindu women was precious. A legitimate question we may put to ourselves is what about the honour and dignity of Muslim women? Is it of less importance or less consequence than that of the other women in India?

The low depths to which politics has sunk in our country is revealed by this attitude of political parties assuring the Muslims on these two points. One can only hope that some day some government or some politi-

cal party will have the courage to tell a minority numerically large in number and potentially important politically that where human rights and dignity are concerned there can be no compromise. Rights cannot be, should not be group rights. If we accept group rights we have to acquiesce in accepted obnoxious group cultural patterns. Examples can be multiplied but a few that touch us nearest illustrate the point, the Hindu caste system, untouchability, social ostracism of the widow, child marriage, the position of the Muslim woman. There can be no rights of the minority or, for that matter, of the majority except under a distorted social perspective. Rights are and must be rights of the individual, this is the approach of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**S**ome credence has to be attached to the grievance of lack of job opportunities. Muslim representation in public services is low, very low; other minorities like the Christians and Parsis are adequately represented. Where lies the remedy? With education, employment should follow. Muslim groups have made good at business and trade, individuals have made outstanding contributions in the professions. As a collectivity, a community, they have to make up a long leeway. But as Beverley Lang has stated in his article on 'India's Muslims' in *World Minorities* 'The problem of the Muslim minority lies not so much in the fact of discrimination, but in the feeling of the community that they are discriminated against. Muslims think of themselves as discriminated against and do not bother to apply for the better jobs'.

With employment is allied the question of education. Here the Muslims on the whole fall behind not only the majority community but far behind other minorities like the Sikhs, Christians and Parsis. The hangover of the past persists and a substantial section of the community looks askance at modern, secular education — except perhaps in large cities and towns — and opts for religious education in the Madrasahs. This dams job opportunities. Muslim leadership serves the community ill by encouraging obscurantism and



not opening new vistas of education and training which maximise or multiply job opportunities

A new demand is put forward for reservation of jobs and seats in the legislatures and other decision-making bodies. This comes to be an extension of such reservation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. But the time is fast approaching when there will have to be re-thinking on these reservations, they cannot be perpetuated. The preferential treatment provided by the Constitution is time-bound, but partly because 30 years as originally contemplated was not adequate we have kept on stretching the period. Political considerations have also contributed to it. At some time some government will have to muster the courage with national welfare at heart to fix a statutory deadline beyond which reverse discrimination must end. Can the year be 2000 A.D.? By then two generations will have been benefitted. The target date, once fixed must be final with no possibility of extension.

Opportunities have multiplied, our economy has expanded, yet with unemployment poverty is a running sore in our society. Those who get left out of the selection by merit feel it is because of their regional, religious or caste affiliation. It is interesting to note here that the Chairmen of two of the largest government recruiting agencies — the Union Public Service Commission and the Staff Selection Commission as also the Director-General of Employment Exchange — belong to the minorities. Under such a dispensation is it not possible that justice is done to their members? The minority psyche can become warped and embitter young people. Sound employment principles will have to be evolved specially for the public sector. These must cut across barriers of region, religion, caste. It may be recalled here how the mid-sixties saw a mushrooming of *senas* in a number of States, how they strutted about as champions of the local people, how they terrorised the 'other', and how a few State governments allowed themselves to be held to ransom. Fortunately that was a passing phase and today we do not hear of them.

We thus see that there are many dimensions to what we generally term the minority problem. One more remains to be reviewed — the majority without whose involvement there can be no reasonable solution. We normally refer to the Hindus as a monolith ignoring the fact that they are a fractionalised society. Gandhiji declared that a civilisation is to be judged by its treatment of minorities. This puts the majority on trial, this heavy responsibility it has not always discharged either to its own credit or to the country's benefit.

That it shares with the minorities their deprivations, poverty and unemployment should make the poor and the disinherited come together in the common cause of the removal of such degradation. On the contrary, we find them also divided. Is it trite to observe that vested interests have a stake in keeping them apart? Among these, political parties and politicians must be rated high.

The majority does owe a greater responsibility to the minorities and must create confidence in them. The postures over time of the vocal sections of our several communities have become rigid, hopefully not too rigid. The majority has to cultivate not merely flexibility but a little generosity. So far as the scheduled castes and tribes are concerned this is a constitutional obligation. How do we tackle the Muslim complex of deprivation? Surely not by laying down quotas and ratios but by encouraging them to shed their exclusiveness, by deliberate efforts to draw them into neighbourhood activities, be it in the village or in urban areas.

The Muslims on their part must surrender something of their exclusiveness which is somewhat difficult against the backdrop of history. The Hindus have had their renaissance, the Muslims have not. The former find it possible to look ahead, the latter do not. Education in the broadest sense of the term proportionately attracts a larger number of the majority community and minorities other than Muslims. This needs to be rectified and it can be done by enlightened Muslim leadership itself.



# Left projections

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

IN the murky politics of today, perhaps the only redeeming feature, however incipient it may be, is the coming together of the two Communist Parties for a joint strategy for the Lok Sabha election. For those who have over the years viewed with concern the mutual bickerings and mud-slinging between the two communist parties as a hindrance to the growth of the Left in the country, this new development brings not only relief but is significant in itself. For not a few of them, this has come as a reward, however modest, for their own endeavour towards bringing the two communist parties together.

This development has to be placed against the backdrop of the almost wholesale distortion of the system of political parties and groupings in the country. In the all-round scramble for power with the collapse of all norms of political behaviour, the record of the two communist parties shines relatively better. It is not that they have not committed mistakes or that their conduct has throughout been without blemish. What is noteworthy is that while most of the other groupings in the present-day Indian polity have been getting more and more enmeshed in sordid politicking, the effort of the two communist parties in this critical phase has been towards overcoming their own shortcomings and, through that exercise, bridging the gap between them.

The least that can be said is that the Indian communist movement is at the present moment taking a new turn. From the phase of disunity leading to fragmentation as could be seen in the last two decades, it is about to enter the new decade with a discernibly different outlook in which the urge for unity is likely to overpower the trend towards disunity.

The significance of this new shift can be gauged when one looks back at what was happening in the past fifteen years in the sphere of electoral politics. Immediately after the communist split in 1964, the Kerala Assembly elections of 1965 saw the two communist parties ranged against each other to the benefit of the anti-communists. In the 1967 general election there was no unity of the two communist parties, rather, they did their best to cut each other out. When the short-lived SVD Ministries were formed in some of the States, both the CPI and the CPI-M supported them, with the CPI going a step further, even joining them in the coalition with Right-wing parties as happened in Bihar, UP and Punjab.

In West Bengal the two CPs after having led rival fronts in 1967, were forced to come together in forming the ministry, it was in the nature of a truce though there was abundance of bad blood. The West Bengal Ministry collapsed because of the machinations of the anti-communists.



within the ruling combine, but in the mid-term poll of 1969, the two communist parties were virtually compelled by circumstances to come into the same united front which swept the polls. Initially, there was great hope in the people and enthusiasm in the ranks of the two communist parties, but all this was smashed to pieces when bickerings led to violent clashes, and then to the ultimate collapse of the Ministry itself ending up in President's rule which was exploited by the Congress to its own advantage at the 1971 poll.

In Kerala, at the other end of the country, a united front of the two communist parties could capture the Ministry at the poll in 1967 but got disrupted with the CPI-M left out of the front and the CPI joining hands with the Congress in the formation of a new Ministry in 1970.

**T**hese happenings at the State level have to be seen against the background of important developments at the national level. The Congress split in 1969 saw the CPI fully supporting Indira Gandhi, making almost a theory about the split in the bourgeoisie as a class, while the CPI-M took the cautious position of supporting it on issues which it considered positive and preventing the return to power of the discredited Congress-0, but it did not venture to make any theory of the split in the ruling class, characterising it only as a crisis in the bourgeois camp.

From this point onward, the paths of the two communist parties moved further and further apart. The CPI, for all practical purposes, became an ally of the Congress under Indira Gandhi, ending up with the support to the Emergency, while the CPI-M, choosing to plough a lonely furrow, was left out in the cold. As the crisis matured in 1974-75, the CPI-M established rapport with the JP-led front but did not join it because of its objection to the RSS being a component. This rapport continued during the Emergency when the CPI-M preferred the tactic of lying low, keeping its powder dry. There were of course exceptions to this general pattern when the compulsions of the mass movement became overpowering, as happened

most conspicuously during the railway strike of 1974, the two CPs had no qualms in joining hands with the Socialists and even with the Jana Sangh, in order to lead the strike.

Came the General Elections of 1977. Both in the Lok Sabha poll in March and the State Assembly polls in June, the CPI-M reaped the benefit of its rapport with the then Opposition forming the Janata Party, while the CPI had to bear the brunt of its association with the Congress and suffered grievously except in Kerala where the CPI-Congress front kept CPI-M in isolation.

**T**he experience of the last three years has brought about a convergence of understanding between the CPI and the CPI-M. While the CPI-M has come out of its support, however covert, to the Janata, the CPI on its part has placed itself in total opposition to the Indira Congress, despite Dange. Inevitably, the two CPs have found themselves nearer to each other and the leadership of both have forged an all-India electoral understanding never seen before. In every State whatever might be the alignments of other political forces, the two communist parties have chosen to remain together in this election — overcoming all the strains that they have to bear internally or externally. A measure of the understanding was provided by the fact that the CPI-M leadership did not confuse Dange's pro-Indira stance with the stand of the CPI rather, the CPI-M leadership has correctly taken it as an isolated aberration and not a case of double talk on the part of the CPI.

Similarly, the CPI leadership did not take seriously some of the imperious pronouncements of the West Bengal CPI-M bosses and did not allow the alliance between the two parties to be weakened or undermined over haggling for seats. Even in Kerala, the two CPs have stuck together despite the obvious miscalculation made by the CPI-M leadership about how to handle the Antony-led Congress, which was however finally rectified.

The election campaign itself has helped to iron out many of the long-standing misunderstandings, whoever

has watched the joint election campaign of the two CPs has been impressed by the surge of enthusiasm that permeates the ranks of both the parties as also the fellow-travellers of both, by the mere fact that they have come together. No doubt this is a landmark in the career of Indian communism.

**A**lthough it has not been stated so far — at least not up to the time when these lines are being written — the obvious next step would be for the two communist parties to form a bloc within Parliament. There is little doubt that in the election the communist gains would be relatively more than that of any other grouping. The leaders of both CPs have in recent statements warned that the times ahead would be turbulent, the implication from it would be that they have to stand together in fair weather or foul. With the discrediting of most of the other combines, the standing of the communist bloc in the new Parliament will be considerable, much more than their numerical strength would perhaps warrant. If the coming months see the emergence of new threats to Indian democracy whether through Indira's Sanjay mafia or through any other combination of circumstances, it would be logical for the communists to stand together in self-defence and also to provide the required leadership for any resistance to such a threat.

But the communist unity can hardly be confined to the precincts of Parliament and the State legislatures, welcome though it may be. Being part of the movement that draws its staple sustenance from continued mass action, it will be futile for the two CPs to come together within Parliament and the Assemblies while keeping their mutual relationship at a standstill outside, in the wider arena of mass activity. Rather, the correct course would have been for them to come together in course of mass activity and then let this be reflected in their unity within Parliament.

It is therefore to be expected that in the sphere of mass action, the two communist parties will now join hands as a matter of course. Already voices are heard in favour of unifying



the mass organisations of workers, peasants, youth and women. All these got bifurcated in the mid-sixties, in the wake of the communist split. Since then, there has been some effort in recent times towards bringing them together, but except for occasional fraternisation of a very formal nature, there has so far been no tangible progress. With the achievement of a united stand in the parliamentary poll, it is only to be expected that the leadership of the two CPs would be encouraged to take the next step and restore the unity of the mass organisations.

**T**he leaders of the two CPs are however cautious in emphasising that what has so far been achieved is 'the beginning of a process' and nothing more. They realise the difficulties to be faced in bringing about the unification of the mass organisations under their respective control. Apart from the problem of the human equation — which is not easy to overcome — the levels of development of these mass organisations have been uneven and the consequences may not be easy to sort out. A formula such as 'parity' may not help. It will require tremendous patience and statesmanship to bring this about.

Two factors however favour any communist initiative in this direction at the moment. First, the election campaign itself has helped to generate a climate of mutual understanding between the two parties which may facilitate the re-building of unified mass organisations. Secondly, the deepening of the politico-economic crisis which appears to be inescapable, will compel the two CPs to build their own fortifications in the wider mass arena, with the long-range objective of striking out from a position of strength. This alone can help to realise the perspective which has been sloganised by the two CPs as Left and Democratic Unity.

It is mainly through this process that the two CPs will be able to draw in another vital segment of the Indian communist movement, which goes by the omnibus term, Naxalism. The extremist groups that are lumped together as Naxalites are many and varied, with the one common feature that, by and large, they

have rejected the path of peaceful transition to socialism, while the two CPs, whether formally or pragmatically have held on to the possibility of peaceful transition. Apart from the impact of the Maoist ideological offensive, there is very little to distinguish the Naxalites from the dedicated communists of the earlier generations. In fact, the very birth of Naxalism is, in a sense, an admission of the inadequacy of the two communist establishments, which tied themselves in very large measure, to parliamentary politics of one form or other; this by itself has led to occasional bouts of reformism. Secondly, the different forms of mass activity led by them have, over the years, been confined to immediate demands of different sections of the working population in a narrow sense, leading to what is generally known as economism, which is divorced from a political perspective.

In the new perspective of the mass organisations being rebuilt on a foundation of unity, it will be possible for them to both attract and absorb the Naxalites, at least a very large section of them. This in turn will help to attract the large body of revolutionary youth, who at the moment would not be attracted to the two established communist parties. The Naxalites on their part have also been going through severe self-introspection in view of the dramatic changes in China, where a drastic, almost unbelievable drive for de-Maoization has been going on — a development which is a traumatic experience for every genuine Maoist. In this phase of re-thinking it may be possible for most of the Naxalites to return to the mainstream of Indian communism.

**T**he building of unified mass organisations will also help to generate independent mass activity. Such activity, if conducted without sectarianism, is bound to attract positive elements from other parties. The Left, in its broadest sense, cannot be confined only to the communists. The Socialists, at least that section of it which is not the victim of allergy to the communists, are bound to respond, and so will the democratic elements in other parties whether from the Congress or the Janata. The situation is favourable

as there is serious groping among the honest elements in every camp for a way out of the present mess. It is only through this process that Left and Democratic Unity can be made into a living reality.

**W**hile the importance of reviving mass activity on a unified basis cannot be over-emphasised, it is time for every serious-minded communist, no matter to which denomination he or she may belong, to realise the urgency of the communist movement striking deep roots into Indian culture, as the custodian of all that is great and noble in the heritage of our civilisation. There has no doubt been piecemeal work by individual Marxist scholars in different aspects of Indian history, philosophy and culture, but there has not been any sustained study and critical examination of our vast and varied culture in its totality as part of a movement for national regeneration.

A powerful communist movement in the true sense of the term could not only have absorbed a Kosalambi but would have carried forward all the work of this calibre. Communist leadership must learn and enrich its own knowledge and understanding of India in all its dimensions. The uneven nature of Indian development in which advance technology has been co-existing with primitive tribalism demands the most exacting endeavour in study, analysis and understanding to bring about the uplift of the down-trodden while preserving what is great and good in our culture in the widest sense.

The communist movement in its early days, particularly from the late thirties right up to the late forties, had established very effective links with the entire community of writers, artists and scientists. Out of these arose the Progressive Writers and the People's Theatre movements apart from attracting many scientists and leaders of different branches of culture. But the blight came with the scorching sectarianism of the first three years after independence, and most of the links were snapped, and these have not yet been reformed.

Meanwhile, during the three decades since independence, a neo-



revivalism has sprouted on the Indian soil which is both philistine in its comprehension and pernicious in its content. If the communist movement has to establish itself firmly on Indian soil, it has to get out of its own narrow groove and take up the task of applying the scientific approach to all facets of India's culture. This demands a positive approach towards those who are already engaged in various spheres of national activity — ranging from the grass-roots study of economy to history, and philosophy. It is suicidal for any communist movement to look down upon all these aspects of human activity as of no concern or consequence for it. Such a narrow approach has the danger of reducing it to either pure economism or infantile adventurism, both of which have brought many setbacks for Indian communism.

A disturbing feature of the present Indian situation is the phenomenal growth of regionalism in the crassest form. It is inevitable that in a country with such a varied conglomeration of cultures and uneven levels of development, mass awakening in different parts of the country should stress regional characteristics. What is harmful is that this awakening is coming up spontaneously and very often as a manifestation of antagonism towards the rest of the country, in most cases, this regionalism conducted under ignorant or unscrupulous leadership confines itself to superficialities without any deep insight into the culture and history of the region itself. This forces the serious, forward-looking elements—of which the Left has to be the most determined contingent—simultaneously to emerge as the defender of all that is rich and noble in the heritage of every region and strengthen at the same time the bonds that bind the region to the nation as a whole. A difficult task no doubt, but the communists by the very nature of their movement can hardly go in for parochialism.

It is through such interaction between what is popularly regarded as pure politics and cultural superstructure that a communist movement can grow into a national force. The leadership of the Indian communist movement can no longer afford to

neglect this important task. From eradication of poverty to the defence of all that is great and beautiful in our long and rich history, the communist movement has to apply its mind. Out of such endeavour will be born a new and abiding ethos, and with it a Left that can exercise the true leadership of the entire nation. To achieve this, it may have to go in for courageous measures. Instead of thinking of the 'mergers' of the different communist parties, could it not think of even setting up a broad party of the working people keeping only to the Marxist methodology? If labels need to be changed to achieve the objective of providing the leadership to the nation as a whole, why can't a bold leadership display the wisdom of examining such a contingency?

Much is said of the international loyalty of the communist movement, and those critical of the communists attack this as a liability. The present state of the international communist movement clearly reveals that there can be no fixed model for the communists all over the world. Secondly, the experience of the international communist movement itself shows that without a firm base, without emerging as the principal national force, no communist party can move forward, and the very compulsion of its strength compels it to seek its own national model. This has been true in Russia, China, Vietnam, Cuba and even to a large measure in the countries of East Europe, while the biggest communist parties outside the orbit of power such as those in Italy and France have emphasised this aspect of the movement. The Indian communist movement has to build on its own rock-like foundations and as it grows in strength and influence, it will not only work out its own path to socialism, but will come to command the respect of forward-looking forces, both communist and non-communist all over the world.

The Indian communist movement has thus reached a critical point given the outlook, determination and wisdom, it has the opportunity to grow into a national force—a multi-dimensional movement. Will it grasp this opportunity or let it pass?



# The economic malaise

RAJ KRISHNA

ANY discussion of the Indian economic scene at any time must evaluate the performance of the economy from the point of view of five commonly accepted objectives (1) growth (of production), (2) full employment, (3) distributive justice, (4) self-reliance and (5) price stability

Enough statistics are available to suggest the following propositions about the progress made so far toward these objectives

Under all regimes, and in all Plan periods so far, the economy has stuck to the very low rate of growth of the order of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to 4 per cent, whereas a majority of other developing countries have been recording rates of growth of the order of 5 to 8 per cent

Progress towards self-reliance in basic production sectors (metals and machinery, chemicals, energy and transport), and in the financing of development, has been very impressive, though technological self-reliance in many frontier areas is still distant

There has been no significant progress towards distributive justice.

The distribution of agricultural land remains as skewed as ever. The distribution of corporate assets is getting progressively more concentrated. The poverty ratio has remained roughly the same (about 45 to 49 per cent depending upon the poverty line chosen) but the absolute number of poor people has continued to grow and is now about 300 million

The mass of unemployment has also continued to grow, and is now estimated to be about 20 million person-years

The rate of inflation was kept moderate in the last four years (1975-1979) but it has escalated again to the level of hyper-inflation

This record of India's development gives rise once again to the same fundamental question: why is it that a large subcontinental country with ample natural resources, manpower resources and financial resources (as reflected in large food and foreign exchange reserves and a high saving rate exceeding 20 per cent), is somehow unable to achieve high growth and distributive justice? This failure to use vast resources more fruitfully can be attributed to two major causes



First, the leadership of the country has proved to be, by and large, insincere to these goals and incompetent to pursue the required policies and establish and operate the necessary institutions and programmes efficiently, and on an adequate scale. And, second, about ninety-five per cent of India's workers (including the workers of all poor households) are still utterly un-unionised, and still not politicised enough, in spite of six general elections, to demand and get their due share in the nation's land, capital, education and employment

On the basis of the field knowledge of diverse policies and projects in different parts of the country it can be safely asserted that absolute poverty and unemployment can be definitely eliminated in India in less than ten years, much progress can be made towards distributive equity, and the rate of growth can be accelerated to at least 5 per cent per annum

There are regions of the country where the rate of growth has exceeded 5 per cent, and where hundreds of thousands of poor families have risen above the poverty line due to the effective, and consciously redistributive, implementation of land reform and/or schemes such as the Antyodaya scheme, the employment guarantee scheme, the irrigation, seed and fertilizer supply schemes, the small and marginal farmer development scheme, credit plans, block-level plans, the food-for-work scheme, the dairy scheme, the village and small industry schemes, and the minimum needs programme \*

Thus the knowledge needed to escalate growth and eradicate poverty exists, but only a different kind of political and administrative leadership can use this knowledge to get the desired results everywhere

If the professional politicians remain excessively busy in an autonomous power-play, whose outcome in any election does not bring about

any significant change in the condition of the masses, we must think of a drastic delegation of economic policy-making, and economic management, to high-powered non-political commissions and corporations of experts

Policy for every key sector can be made by a sector commission, and the operation of development projects entrusted to genuinely autonomous corporations run by professional managers and technocrats. The tasks of overall economic resource allocation, policy formulation, and coordination, can be performed by a strengthened Planning Commission. The elected politicians can continue to lay down objectives and targets in general terms, but they must leave the details of policy and management to commissions and corporations, without interference. At the operational levels, the commissions/corporations must, of course, have advisory bodies with representatives of all affected-interests, and especially the poverty groups

Without structural changes of this kind the low-growth-and-growing-poverty syndrome is likely to continue indefinitely in large parts of the country

Concerning the content of policy, one can list, without trying to be exhaustive, a few major policy departures which can have a substantial impact on production and distribution in a short time

In the field of agriculture, the high current rates of growth of irrigation capacity, fertilizer consumption and institutional credit must be relentlessly maintained until all irrigable land (about 107 million hectares) is irrigated and the unrealised yield potentials of the order of 200 to 300 per cent are realised. Farmers must be guaranteed, for all their major products, prices covering full costs but no more. Otherwise inflationary pressures will continue to grow

In the field of production/investment, as well as distribution, a 'rational dualism' should be the basic policy. This would mean, in concrete terms, that about half of annual investment should continue to be in the public sector to ensure the steady

development of basic sectors—metals and machinery, energy, heavy chemicals, transport and communications, health, education, and scientific research. The rest of the investment, mainly in agriculture, small industry and large-scale consumer industry, should continue to be in the private sector. This investment should be progressively freed from industrial and import licensing and other restrictions subject to the following essential safeguards

(1) The progress of important import substitution industries and their protection against foreign competition by means of quotas (or preferably duties) should be maintained.

(2) In actual or potential mass employment industries, small units must be protected against the competition of large units until unemployment disappears.

(3) The industrial assets controlled by the top business houses should be subjected to a ceiling.

It should be understood that these are the major objective reasons for investment and import licensing. Any private investment which does not come under the scope of these imperatives can be safely delicensed.

In practice, this approach would imply that the State would appropriate a part of the available savings for public investment in basic sectors, specify a list of investments subject to prohibitions, duties or quotas for the sake of protection or deconcentration, and release all remaining investments from licensing

In the field of distribution, again, the principle of rational dualism would entail that a portion, not exceeding half, of the available supply of any essential intermediate or consumer product (food, common cloth, sugar, edible oil, petroleum products, coal, power, steel, etc.), in short supply, would be appropriated by the State and made available, on a priority basis, to vulnerable consumers, priority users or small users, through a public marketing network, at a subsidised price, and the rest of the supply would be allowed to be traded freely in the open market without any control on movement, pricing or

\* These schemes are conservatively estimated to have created about 5 million person-years of additional employment in 1978-79.



distribution The principle here is that the State must directly meet priority demands without trying to impose purely negative and counter-productive price and distribution controls on the flow of residual supplies

A rational dualism of this kind would ensure that progress towards the goals of self-reliance and equity is safeguarded and yet the bulk of the production and distribution system is freed from unnecessary and irrational restrictions

**T**he crisis in the management of three vital sectors — coal, power and transport — needs to be tackled with a sense of extreme urgency It is a man-made crisis which is preventing the achievement of a high rate of industrial growth which is otherwise possible. Three major policy approaches can be suggested to deal with the crisis

First, where the crisis is essentially a law-and-order problem, as in parts of Eastern India, competent District Magistrates and police authorities should be allowed to use all their legal powers to restore complete security of life, property and mobility without political interference

Second, dualism should be introduced in the coal and power sectors so that up to 25 per cent of the capacity in these sectors may be allowed to be owned and operated by the private sector Some of the old and new mines can be auctioned to private parties, provided that their combined share in total capacity does not exceed 25 per cent And subject to the same proviso more private thermal, mini-hydel, solar and biogas power units can be freely allowed to be established to service production units in particular areas or sectors. This policy would quickly augment capacity and relieve the unending misery of coal and power consumers Similarly, the misery of railway and public bus users can be alleviated if new bus and truck manufacturing capacity is freely licensed, and private bus and truck operators registered for any routes they want, even if they compete with State undertakings

Third, for some of the grossly mismanaged units in the coal, power

and transport sectors, fixed-period management contracts can be given to management consultancy firms while State ownership remains

From the social point of view, absolutely identical criteria (a minimum social rate of return and/or minimum contributions to employment equity or self-reliance) must be used to assess the performance of public as well as private enterprises And, therefore, in general, in all civilian production sectors, private enterprises found inefficient with these criteria should be nationalised; and public sector enterprises found inefficient, with the same criteria, should be auctioned, or their management contracted out, subject only to the over-riding proviso that in basic and infrastructure sectors the share of the State in investment does not fall below 50 per cent The commanding position of the State in key sectors will thus be maintained and yet sufficient dualist competition will be introduced to ensure more rapid growth and operational efficiency

There is a case in democratic theory for the State controlling a substantial proportion of capacity in key sectors but none for condemning the people forever to chronic shortages and despicable service and supply standards maintained by callous and corrupt, rude and rapacious State monopolies Rational and competitive economic dualism of the type indicated can bring some relief to the harassed populace

**A**nother structural reform needed to keep up the rate of investment is that savings invested in scheduled assets should be made progressively exempt from taxation (subject to some very high ceiling), while consumption continues to be heavily but progressively taxed.

And, finally, in order to promote industrial peace as well as economy, it is essential that there be national guidelines for wage contracts, linking all increases in emoluments in the organised public sector, and the private sector, to increases in objective indices of performance in every industry plus increases in cost of living indices, estimated by expert bodies Whenever collective bargaining fails there must be rigorously

enforced compulsory, but quick, arbitration of every dispute, conforming to the national guidelines

**P**rogress towards distributive justice can also be greatly accelerated if the following policy measures are sincerely implemented again by autonomous agencies \*

The surplus land already identified (about 5 million acres) should be definitely distributed to the landless within 5 years through the medium of an expanded machinery set up for the purpose The required machinery has been detailed in the report of the Raj Krishna Committee Additional surplus land (about 15 million acres) should be identified by plugging loopholes in the legal definition of surplus land.

All personally cultivating tenants and crop-sharers should be given title-deeds, conferring ownership on them of the lands they till, on the basis of quick, on-the-spot inquiries by empowered authorities The procedures can be similar to those adopted in Kerala, West Bengal and Karnataka All currently cultivating tenants, identified as such, can thus be made owners within 5 years

Block-level committees and tribunals should be appointed to implement land ceilings and tenancy reforms On these bodies, selected representatives of the landless and of tenants should have at least 50 per cent representation.

States should be asked to enact a Rural Workers' Protection and Organization Act on the model of the Kerala Agricultural Workers Act of 1974

The share of small and marginal farmers, landless workers and artisans in institutional credit should be raised to at least 50 per cent in the next 5 years

A Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, on the (improved) Maharashtra pattern must be extended in

\*Some of the proposals of this section have appeared in one or two manifestos because they were sent by the author to members of the manifesto advisory committees in October



phases to *all regions* of the country within 15 years as a core scheme of the five year plans. For the formulation of efficient full employment plans for all blocks, Techno-Economic Project Formulation Bureaus must be established in all districts and blocks. The plans must specially cover every poor/underemployed family on the Antyodaya pattern.

A work guarantee should be declared in a block as soon as a block plan for full employment has been made and approved.

Collectors (District Development Officers) and/or elected bodies must be given fully decentralised funds and powers to have district/ block plans for full employment prepared and implemented.

**A**ccess to the following items of infrastructure and social services provided or subsidised by the State must be recognised as the elementary right of all rural and urban communities, and especially the rural poor and urban slum dwellers:

- (1) ample and clean water supply,
- (2) energy (electricity, wood, coal, biogas, and/or diesel, kerosene),
- (3) all weather pucca roads,
- (4) comfortable mass transit,
- (5) health and family planning knowledge, supplies and services,
- (6) literacy and continuous non-formal education to transmit civic knowledge and professional knowledge, and to upgrade skills,
- (7) sanitation (with increasingly mechanised and covered waste and sewage haulage, disposal and recycling), and
- (8) housing (for the poor)

The Sixth Plan quantitative targets for these amenities must be fulfilled.

A ceiling on assets controlled by top houses must be administered.

And a law should be enacted to provide tax and non-tax incentives for companies making their perma-

nent workers shareholders out of a part of their gross profits. Public sector companies must be directed to give a lead in this direction.

The public distribution system of fair price shops be expanded to cover the needs of urban and, increasingly, the rural poor, in respect of grain, Janata cloth, sugar, edible oil and kerosene (or other fuel).

Preference must be given to women (and/or women dominated institutions) to the extent of 25 per cent in the allocation of all public sector credit, jobs, and educational and training opportunities.

Banks and DICs should be directed to absorb a fixed minimum number of educated youth every year in self-employment on the basis of the technical, financial and marketing assistance given to them.

**A** Rs 10-crore National Fund for the Organisation of the Rural & Urban Poor must be created forthwith out of the Central Plan funds to give small organisational (subsistence/office/transport) subsidies to all unions of the poor regardless of their political affiliation. The annual subsidy should be proportional to the judicially ascertained membership of every union.

A larger fund must be created to finance elections, and operated similarly. And the Constitution must be amended to provide that in all legislatures and local bodies, only about one-third of the members will be elected on a purely geographical basis, as at present, about one-third will be elected by graduates/professionals in proportion to their professional shares and unemployment, and the rest elected by the underemployed and employed poverty groups in proportion to their strength in the labour force in different lines of activity and their unemployment status.

The philosophy behind these proposals is that distributive justice will never come about without the universal unionisation and politicisation of the poor and the unemployed, and their weighted representation in the legislatures, along with the intelligentsia.



# Public enterprises—A bad year?

H K PARANJAPÉ

THE *Financial Express* of November 28, 1979 has the following headings on the first page 'Bailadilla Stir costs Rs 4.5 crores exchange', 'U.P. Power Strike continues as talks fail', 'Coal Officers' strike from Saturday', 'STC officers call off strike', 'Vizag loco staff strike off'

While this might be a particularly bad day of news, or even a particular slant of a given newspaper, it cannot be denied that there is an increasing impression in the country that the public sector is falling down on its job. As some of the essential infrastructure services such as transport, fuel and power are provided by public sector organisations, and so also essential facilities of a modern economy such as banking, inefficiency in, or interruption of, production in these cannot but seriously affect the functioning of all

other sectors, and the economy as a whole. A vicious circle then sets in, what with the inefficiency in one sector affecting the productive capacity in another and in turn the effect being carried to the first one.

We have had for quite some time now the unedifying spectacle of railway authorities blaming those in charge of coal production and *vice versa* in order to convince the public that each had a lesser responsibility for the difficulties that the country was facing. But the main point of public concern is that, as a result of their joint failure, power houses in many parts of the country have had to work with reduced capacities, industries have not received their fuel, and large scale power shedding has affected all economic sectors including agriculture as also the normal life in urban areas. The failure of power stations in turn affects the working of coal mines

\*The views expressed here are personal



adversely. Inadequacy of coal results in cancellation of tram services on routes where steam engines are used, and this further worsens the vicious circle, continuously pulling the economy downward and creating a spiral of low production, high prices, increasing unemployment, and hardships all round.

The impression that public sector undertakings are doing very badly and are letting down the economy and the country is so widespread that even the previous Prime Minister, Morarji Desai, as well as the present one, Charan Singh, apparently made it publicly known that they were very unhappy with the poor financial results shown by many of these enterprises. There have been inspired reports in the press that the government is even thinking of selling away some of the poorly operating enterprises to the private sector.

Such public censure coming from the Prime Minister of the country is bound to affect the morale of all those who manage the public sector and also its image among the citizens. It would provide an excellent handle to those elements who have always been opposed to the industrial policy pursued during the last thirty years. This policy attempted to develop the public sector as one which would foster economic growth, provide an instrument for technical and social transformation and command the heights of the economy so as to reduce the influence of private business circles on the policies and economics of the country. The question has therefore to be raised: has the public sector been doing very badly, especially in the recent past and, if so, what is it due to? What should be done about it?

There is no doubt that the successful and efficient conduct of public sector enterprises is of critical importance to the proper functioning and growth of our economy. The public sector controls vital areas of the economy, and its scope now covers a large part of the country's organised economic activity. The Indian Railways are the largest public sector enterprise, carry some 8 lakh passengers and 65 lakh tonnes

of goods every day, and employ almost 17 lakh persons. Most of the electric power generated in the country is through public sector units both under the Central and State Governments, and most of the distribution is also undertaken through public units.

The bulk of the banking activity in the country is through nationalised banks and all types of insurance services are provided only by public sector institutions. Term loans for industrial units are provided by public sector financial institutions, and agricultural credit is largely provided either by public sector banks or by cooperative institutions under the guidance and support of the nationalised central bank of the country. All broadcasting activities and communication services are provided by government agencies, and so also are postal services.

The number of central public enterprises engaged in manufacturing and servicing activities, besides the above, increased to over 150 by 1978 with the total investment exceeding Rs 13,000 crores. While the activities undertaken by these enterprises cover a very wide range, the public sector units largely or wholly control the production of steel, coal, petroleum, fertilizers and heavy engineering equipment in the field of manufacturing, and air transport services as well as foreign trade in certain vital commodities. The efficient and successful functioning of these enterprises is therefore of great importance because they operate in certain critical infrastructure areas of the economy and also because such a large part of national investment has been made on them.

Inefficient performance by them not only sets in the vicious circle as explained above, but also makes the task of capital accumulation and further economic development more difficult. It cannot be overlooked that among the considerations which led to the emphasis on the development of the public sector was the idea that these enterprises could be relied upon to ensure the provision of basic goods and services of the right quality and in adequate quantities, that they would avoid waste and through their surpluses help the process of capital

accumulation, and that by creating a new atmosphere of professional management and internal democracy, they would set the pattern for the growth of a new India. Why is it that there is a widespread impression now that these objectives are far from being fulfilled?

Firstly, it must be said that the impression of the poor performance of the public sector units gets created at least partly because of certain special reasons. These units provide services which directly affect a very large number of citizens, and hence even a little failure on their part is far more widely noticed than the failure of private sector enterprises. Suburban trains being cancelled, one's not getting a railway reservation or obtaining it only after paying a bribe, domestic power suddenly going off, telegrams being irregularly delivered, telephones functioning badly, or air services being delayed, are matters that come to be noticed by a far wider body of citizens than would happen in the case of production of most of the private business organisations.

Even marginal failures on the part of public enterprises of this kind affect so many other enterprises and individuals that their failure gets to be widely publicised. The fact that enormous jobs are being comparatively successfully handled is many times overlooked. A very large number of trains reach on time; most people, except in the holiday season, secure their reservations and seats; power supply has increased manifold and the number of villages electrified has multiplied at a rapid rate, the telephone network now covers a very large number of places in the countryside and STD facilities cover large areas of the country, the number of bank branches has increased rapidly, and a large number of persons who would never have been able to obtain banking facilities now obtain them and do not have to resort to the money lender — these facts usually get overlooked in the hurly burly of discomforts and troubles of everyday life which people have to suffer when dealing with many of these key enterprises.

When there are shortages of commodities which are produced and



marketed by the private sector, while people vaguely feel annoyed about the role of traders, they ascribe these difficulties also to the government because they think that the government should have done something about the matter so as to save them from such difficulties. When traders profiteer, most people by long habit of thought assume that this is only natural, but when public enterprises fail, few citizens have the patience to look at the matter objectively. The newspapers, many of them deliberately and some of them due to sheer habit, write critically about the poor performance of public sector enterprises.

**M**any of the critics usually overlook the fact that there are far more data today made available about the performance of the public sector. How many private sector units would be able to come out successful in the kind of scrutiny, public examination and discussion to which public sector enterprises are subjected? In the few instances where working of private sector units or groups have been subjected to critical enquiry, not many have come out unscathed. This fact is ignored even by intelligent critics of the public sector who appear to think that, because little is known about the internal operation and management of the private sector, everything is all right there.

The fact that a very large number of these enterprises have been turning sick and have had to be either specially supported or taken over by government, is conveniently forgotten. After all, the large number of textile units under the National Textile Corporation and also quite a large number of engineering enterprises which are today in the public sector originally belonged to the private sector, the public sector had to take them over because otherwise the units would have closed down and a large body of workers would have been on the street. Whether the government would not have done better by permitting these companies to go bankrupt and taking over the sick units only at their bankruptcy value is an important point that needs attention.

**T**his is not to say that everything is fine with the public sector enterprises. The performance of these enterprises, as can be expected, is a very mixed one. In 1977-78, goods-producing enterprises have had a gross profit of 5.9% on capital employed while the service-producing enterprises have recorded a gross profit of 11.5%. After providing for interest on loans which constitute about half of the capital employed in these enterprises, among the goods-producing enterprises some 43 provided a net profit amounting to Rs 441 crores, while 51 incurred a net loss totalling Rs 363 crores<sup>1</sup>. The most glaring losses were incurred by enterprises such as Coal India and its subsidiaries and the fertilizer units. Their losses can be largely ascribed to a conscious decision by government to keep their prices low. Among service enterprises losses were incurred by concerns such as those in the shipping field which are in difficulty for reasons largely beyond their control.

A better understanding of the operating efficiency of these enterprises can be obtained by looking at the position regarding 'capacity utilisation'. Of course, it is well known that the concept of capacity and the measurement of its utilisation present a host of difficulties. But even then it is worthwhile noting that, out of a total of 175 units operating in 1977-78, leaving aside 33 which were in early stages of production, 71 recorded capacity utilisation exceeding 71%, 31 between 50 and 75% and only 27 below 50%. The utilisation is found to be generally good in fields like steel, coal, minerals and petroleum.

Low utilisation in other areas is mainly related to specific factors. In

<sup>1</sup> This may be compared with the sample of 415 private sector companies used by the Reserve Bank of India. These showed in 1977-78 gross profits of 11.3% on net assets. Out of 415 companies, 371 made gross profits totalling Rs 1130 crores while 44 made losses totalling Rs 36 crores. See, Reserve Bank of India Bulletin, June 1979, pp 263-315, for the public enterprise data, see Annual Report on the Working of Industrial and Commercial Undertakings of the Central Government 1977-78, Vol I (published by the Bureau of Public Enterprises).

fertilizer units, for example, problems relating to new processes and teething as well as the inadequate availability of power and essential raw materials have played an important role in affecting capacity utilisation adversely. In engineering units, lack of demand has been of importance as, for example, in the wagon building unit of Braithwaite and Company, Scooters India, or Heavy Engineering Corporation. There are, of course, factors such as poor maintenance, breakdown of important segments of plants and poor labour relations which have also affected capacity utilisation. The low capacity utilisation of large and new complexes as in the field of ship construction has also to be thought of in terms of teething troubles as well as management inadequacies. What is, however, necessary to note is that, if the public sector is looked at in a properly disaggregated manner, the performance of this sector is found not to be as bad as would appear to be the case when an aggregative picture, especially in purely financial terms of return from capital, is presented.

**W**hen thinking of the results achieved by public enterprises, some other aspects should also not be overlooked. Not only is the public sector obliged in many cases to take over sick units from the private sector but it also has to undertake obligations such as reserving at various personnel levels, including promotion categories, to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. No such obligations apply to private sector units. Similarly, public sector enterprises are expected to give in their purchases a 15% price preference to small scale units. While these are measures which are certainly socially laudable, they *can* have an adverse effect, at least in the short run, on the efficient operation and financial results of the enterprises.

At the same time, there are few public enterprises which are free to charge prices as they like. Because they produce goods and services which are of critical importance to the economy, the prices charged by them are subject to government control in one manner or another, and it has not been unusual for gov-



ernment to keep these administered prices at uneconomically low levels for long, thus making the financial position of these enterprises very difficult. Railway tariffs have thus increased far less than the general level of prices and also the costs incurred by railways. Electric power rates have similarly been kept down. Coal prices since nationalisation have risen far less than the costs of various inputs including labour which constitutes a very large part of coal mining costs.

It is well known that for some years Coal India Limited incurred a net loss on every tonne of coal that it mined and sold, and still government insisted for long on keeping coal prices unchanged. The petroleum prices permitted to the public sector oil agencies are far lower than the prices paid for imported crude, and the consumer is given the benefit of pooled prices which is not only bad for the finances of the ONGC and other public sector agencies but also wrong from the point of view of discouraging the consumption of petroleum products. Steel prices have all along been kept so low that, with even 100% capacity utilisation, steel plants could not make enough profits to build up adequate reserves for their expansion, and at the same time there has been a flourishing black-market in steel. These examples should be adequate to indicate how, almost as a matter of deliberate policy, successive governments have made the financial position of public sector enterprises difficult.

**P**ublic enterprises have been specially set up and developed in areas of difficult technology, high capital intensity and long gestation periods. To examine their performance on the same basis as private sector enterprises which are mostly in quite a different category is therefore obviously irrational. One has also to note that the enterprises such as those in the field of electronics, fertilizers, steel and engineering have undertaken considerable work by way of R&D and designing capability so as to reduce the country's dependence on foreign collaboration and technology. Organisations like MECON, RITES as well as

BHEL are even increasingly able to secure contracts abroad, especially in the newly developing countries of Asia and Africa, in competition with the much stronger and better developed concerns from advanced countries. These indirect but potentially very important advantages earned by public sector enterprises are many times ignored by those who criticise public sector performance.

**T**his is not to say that there is nothing wrong with the public sector. As mentioned earlier, the public sector enterprises have not been performing too well in terms of satisfying the expectations aroused by them in the citizenry and, what is even more alarming, the position seems to be going from bad to worse in the recent past. It is true that the situation in the whole country has been deteriorating, and public enterprises cannot be expected to be islands immune to what has been happening in the economy as a whole. It is, however, necessary that corrective steps for setting right the public sector enterprises should specially be taken with speed as on their performance largely depends that of the rest of the economy. Having taken over most of the 'commanding heights' of the economy in the public sector, it is obviously necessary that the public sector should accept the responsibility of pioneering and reversing the trend towards deterioration.

The problems that adversely affect the successful conduct of public enterprises have been discussed for long and the changes that are necessary have been repeated *ad nauseum*. What is necessary, however, is to emphasise the important ones and suggest what minimum steps could be taken so as to reverse the present disturbing trends.

One of the essential requirements for successful conduct is that there should be a much greater clarity about the objectives that these enterprises are to pursue and the criteria by which their performance will be judged. Not only has there been a diversity of views expressed by political leaders, administrators, academics and other leaders of public opinion about these matters, but

even the same group of persons have spoken in different veins at different times resulting in greater confusion. Are the enterprises essentially meant to ensure self-sufficiency both in essential goods and services and in technology, or are they meant only to ensure the earning of profits on the large investments made in them? Are they to give special importance to social responsibilities such as providing a fair deal to workers, treating the consumers properly and justly if not generously, and looking after other social obligations such as going to backward regions, recruiting handicapped sections of the population and helping small scale enterprises, and if so how much cost can they incur for this purpose? How much lower efficiency or short run low profitability can they tolerate for the purpose of attempting to adapt or develop new technology or ensure greater national self-sufficiency?

**T**hese questions have merely to be put to indicate that no precise answers to them can be provided. What is, however, necessary is that some kind of charter regarding the priority of goals should be laid down for each enterprise and this should preferably be in quantitative terms. An enterprise should be normally expected to be judged by its capacity utilisation and its balance-sheet performance, except that this would be judged in the context of the long period, and not merely in terms of a few years' performance. If the government wants that the public sector should fulfil certain social obligations, to the extent possible, the costs of such obligations should be quantified, and credit should be given to the enterprise for carrying out such obligations.

Where certain overall social goals are to be achieved, it is high time the government insisted on similar treatment being meted out to all enterprises whether in the private or in the public sectors. While private sector enterprises, especially those belonging to a particular house or group, are quite free to show special preference to each other in various ways, the little preference that public enterprises were supposed to show to other public enterprises was deliberately removed by a directive



which the government issued last year. Surely, if the government wants to be so meticulous about public sector enterprises not receiving any preference, it should at least be equally meticulous about their not having to face special disadvantages as compared to similarly large private sector units.

**T**he question relating to the degree of functional autonomy which the enterprises should enjoy has been a matter of considerable debate and discussion. While every one accepts in theory that there should be adequate delegation of authority and powers from the government to the enterprises, and within the enterprises from higher to lower rungs, in practice the tradition of concentrating authority and powers at the top dies hard especially in a government system. The insistence by Parliament and its Committees on raising questions even about the detailed management and administration of enterprises reiterate and support the already strong tendency of ministers and the Secretariat to attempt to manage the enterprises from New Delhi.

In any case, this is bound to have a very deleterious effect on the efficiency of management of far flung organisations spread in different parts of the country. With reduced political stability in the country and the prospects of transient ministries and ministers in charge, interference by government many times cannot but play havoc with the long term interest and requirements of enterprises. Some recent reports regarding short-sighted interference by various ministers in enterprises either with a view to making a show of effectiveness or because of private motives strongly indicate the necessity of creating a firm structure of sound institutional relationships between governmental organisations and enterprises. Even though we have created legally autonomous Corporations and Companies for running most public enterprises, a number of built-in devices as well as conventions of long standing have made nonsense of the legal fiction of autonomy. Not only are top officials and chief executives of enterprises appointed by the government but apparently it is not difficult for

ministers to terminate their services at their whims.

While the creation of the Public Enterprise Selection Board has provided a useful safeguard to ensure that a systematic attempt is made for a proper selection of persons to occupy top posts, instances *have* occurred of the ministers not accepting the recommendations of the Board, and even though this has happened only in rare cases in the past, unless a firm convention is established about the matter, short-lived ministries and ministers may be increasingly tempted to do otherwise.

The appointment of a large number of serving civil servants on the Boards of enterprises also makes it difficult for the enterprises to build up their own personality, and function with the necessary degree of detachment and independence. Serving civil servants directly work with the Ministers, and as the reports of various enquiries indicate, they have not usually shown any great capacity to withstand wrong pressures from their political masters. A recent report of the Committee on Public Undertakings indicates that in certain enterprises the number of officials on the Boards is very large; 5 out of 8 in Modern Bakeries, 6 out of 9 in the State Trading Corporation, 8 out of 10 in Hindustan Aeronautics, 4 out of 5 in Hindustan Antibiotics and all in Bharat Electricals and Hindustan Cables. It is also reported that there were officials in certain ministries who served as Directors on as many as 8 or 9 public enterprises, in addition to their normal departmental duties. This is obviously not the best way in which the Boards can be manned and the enterprises assured of autonomy and independence.

**M**oreover, the lack of effective delegation of powers even to chief executives of enterprises and also the nearness of the Secretariat officers to the ministers, usually means that the chief executives find themselves in the unhappy position of having to play second fiddle to the secretariat officials, on their Boards or otherwise, even though such officials may be far junior or less experienced. We have even had instances where, when chief executives of

enterprises who then valued their autonomy and independence were posted as secretaries in the concerned ministries, they began to operate as super-Chairmen or Managing Directors forgetting their earlier experience and approach.

It is high time that government and Parliament accepted the approach that there should be a clear idea of the role of government, which is that of creating public sector organisations, laying down their structure and charter of objectives, appointing their senior executives and Board, and then reviewing their performance from time to time, and interfering in their working only if things are going wrong. Otherwise government — the ministers and Secretariat officials — should leave the enterprises well alone. If government wants the enterprises to pursue certain policies, those should be laid down in the form of a written directive.

**A**nother important problem which continues to plague public enterprises is the tendency to have enterprises of a gigantic size on the one side and to provide inadequate delegation to directly operational levels on the other. The British example of nationalised industries being organised as large corporations appears to have unduly influenced our government in this matter. Thus, when life insurance was nationalised, in place of a large number of independent insurance companies, a single Life Insurance Corporation was established. One expectation from this was that, as a result of streamlining, administrative expenditure and the expense ratio would go down and the policy holders would get a better deal. The record of the LIC shows that no such thing has happened while, at the same time, as a result of the monopolistic and monolithic structure of the LIC, the policy holders get comparatively poor service.

Similarly, when coal was nationalised, one authority was created to be in charge of coal mining spread all over the country, and even though regional corporations have now been established, there continues to be inadequate delegation and over-centralisation. When the late Mohan Kumaramangalam establish-



ed the Steel Authority of India, his idea appeared to be to make SAIL purely a holding company, looking after future plans, laying down overall guidelines, assessing performance and dealing with governmental functions in a more businesslike fashion, while the individual units were to be left to manage themselves. The actual experience of the working of SAIL, as related some time back by an erstwhile General Manager<sup>2</sup>, has been different; the attempt of the Chairman of SAIL apparently continued to be to concentrate all important powers in the Head Office. More recently, the Steel Ministry has been separated from SAIL so that the holding company merely provides an extra layer in between the plants and the top authority.

It is high time that the necessity to devise a structure of sector corporations, generally autonomous for most purposes, and operating as holding companies with full delegation of management powers to the managers on the spot, came to be established. Unless this is done, the ill effects of gigantism and bureaucracy would make it impossible to bring about an improvement in the functioning of some of the critical areas of our economy.

Another serious difficulty faced by public enterprises in this connection is the attempt to make them subject to remote control, not only by the administrative ministry concerned but also by the finance Ministry and, in more recent years, by the Bureau of Public Enterprises. The Bureau was organised initially more as a clearing house of information and an expert body which would help the enterprises rather than as an instrument of government control, but increasingly it appears to have taken on the latter role. The introduction of government procedures to some extent has become unavoidable with the insistence by government and Parliament on the audit of government enterprises by the Comptroller and Auditor General whose audit largely continues to be more in the nature of governmental audit rather

than in the nature of commercial audit.

It has also been laid down, as in the case of government departments, that the Financial Adviser will have a special role to play even *vis-a-vis* the General Manager and will be able to have direct access to the Board. The latter has on it almost invariably a representative of the Ministry of Finance. This is a system under which, as one Chief Executive put it, the Financial Adviser becomes a financial *controller* with little responsibility for actual performance.

An important issue which remains unresolved in this context is whether the public enterprise managements should be expected to operate with quite a different spirit and with very different incentives as compared to private sector enterprises. Thus, there is continuous emphasis on public sector salary scales and perquisites being very much lower than those in the private sector. By and large, they are attempted to be put at levels similar to those in the civil service though, at the highest level, the salaries are now a little higher. Surely, the emphasis in the enterprises should be on a policy of 'hire and fire', and the remunerations should be higher to compensate for the risk involved. The top appointments even now are made on a contract of four to six years and, therefore, there is less security for these persons than in the civil service.

Experience elsewhere shows that, in business type organisations, the greater the incentive payments related to a suitable measure of performance, the better. Special increments, bonuses based on achievements, and other such methods of incentives have already been considered appropriate for enterprise managers even in the USSR, and they are again being adopted in China. What is the reason for us in India to think that our top management personnel will be guided by different motives and will put in their best irrespective of the rewards? This is not generally done in the civil service, not because it is not desirable but because it is usually impractical. To insist that what cannot be done in the civil service should also not be done in public enterprises is,

therefore, to unnecessarily remove an important instrument available for improving performance.

It should also be mentioned that while there have been attempts recently under the Companies' Act to reduce the remuneration available to managerial personnel in the private sector, it is not clear to what extent this effort is succeeding in really effecting reductions in such remunerations<sup>3</sup>. It is well known that many private sector units make various advantages including unaccounted cash payments available to their personnel which cannot happen in the public sector. Thus arises the curious situation that while the public sector enterprises are the more critical and the more difficult ones to develop and manage, the remunerations and other prospects available to personnel are better in the private sector.<sup>4</sup> While some talented persons would be attracted and retained in the public sector for reasons of job satisfaction this remuneration policy cannot but encourage a flow of talent to the private sector instead of to the public sector. It does not very frequently happen that persons with good management experience from the private sector are attracted to the public sector. It is only those who are in difficulty or have come in conflict that make the shift. This is surely not desirable.<sup>5</sup>

There has been a tendency on the part of political and administrative

<sup>3</sup> *e.g.*, it appears that there is a tendency for senior personnel to be made paid executives and removed formally from positions on the Boards where the rules are, under the Companies' Act, more stringent. See *Business Standard*, dated 28th November, 1979, p 1.

<sup>4</sup> Thus in the sample of 415 private sector companies, the number of employees paid over Rs 36,000 p.a. was 20,369 in 1977-78. The total remuneration paid to them was Rs 115 crores *i.e.* Rs 56,000 p.a. on an average. The highest salary permitted in the public sector, usually to one person in a large enterprise is Rs 48,000 p.a. (Reserve Bank of India Bulletin *op cit*).

<sup>5</sup> While no quantitative data are available, there is a general impression that the best products of our prestigious Institutes of Technology and Management do not join the public sector, they either go abroad, or join the private sector.

<sup>2</sup> See, Bagaram Tulpule *Amidst Heat and Noise - Durgapur Recalled* New Delhi, 1977.



leaders as well as Parliament and its Committees to expect that the public sector managers should be content with remunerations much lower than those in the private sector. This is surely unrealistic. While there is no doubt that inequalities in the remunerations in the organised sector between the top and the bottom are unduly high in India and need to be reduced, this has to be done as a part of an overall policy for incomes, price and wages

There have been some attempts recently to work out such a policy. Unfortunately, the emphasis appears to be more on controlling wages, to begin with, than on reducing high incomes and conspicuous consumption. In any case, the idea that the public sector managers should have a psychology very different from their counterparts in the private sector is surely unrealistic and any policy based on such an approach cannot but lead either to inadequate talent being attracted or the personnel putting in less than their best

**I**ncidentally, another danger to be guarded against is that of enterprises being used for providing suitable job opportunities for politicians or civil servants who cannot be accommodated elsewhere. In the central public enterprises, this danger is somewhat reduced by a rule under which Members of Parliament cannot be appointed on the Boards of enterprises. While the claims of civil servants to join public sector units as executives are considered by the selection authorities, they cannot remain on deputation for long and, therefore, the possibility of their using the enterprise positions as temporary posts among the many open to civil servants is considerably reduced. But this is not so in the rapidly increasing number of government corporations and companies under State governments. There is a growing tendency for these Companies to be headed by Chairmen who are politicians who cannot be accommodated as ministers and who have no special experience or technical ability to contribute to the functioning of the enterprise

There is also a tendency in the State government enterprises to

assign serving civil servants on short tenures of a year or so to managerial posts. Such officials also have no special expertise or experience, and not even an adequate stake to ensure that the enterprise performance is continuously improved. In many States, the use of government corporations for such appointments has not only resulted in a waste of public resources but brought increasing discredit to the name of the public sector

**A** related question that has some significance is the extent to which government's rules and regulations should apply in public enterprises. One finds that, not infrequently, policies adopted by government are with a slight gap of time made applicable to public enterprises, specially in respect of personnel. Thus when government decided that persons owning houses should not be given government accommodation, a similar rule was applied to public enterprises, when this rule was reversed by government after some time, the rule for public enterprises was also reversed

The ridiculous extent to which detailed control is exercised by government over public enterprise personnel is indicated by the fact that a directive was issued by the government that alcoholic drinks should not be served by public enterprises at any official function unless the chief guest were a foreigner, within a fortnight, another directive was issued that such drinks should not be served even if the chief guest were a foreigner. The traditional directives issued by the Department of Expenditure, whenever there is a move for economising expenditure, to impose cuts in travelling allowances, contingencies, entertainment and telephones are similarly issued in respect of public enterprises also

Recently, as a result of a report of the Committee on Public Undertakings, it has even been suggested that all enterprises should endeavour to have a pool of staff cars in important centres and that they should have a common guest house. All foreign tours even of chief executives of enterprises have to be approved by the secretary to the ministry

and, in any case, the number of trips are not to exceed three, extended over 30 days in a year! The rule does not make a distinction between small and large enterprises, or between enterprises which deal with foreign countries considerably and those which do not! It is even expected that government nominees on the Boards of Directors are to make sure that these instructions are complied with.

It is this kind of detailed interference which makes the work of public enterprises unpleasant in that, instead of looking at the main achievements or failures, attention is concentrated on such petty matters. This is hardly a way of improving the morale of the top executives of the enterprises. It should be added that there is hardly any such restriction on the chief executive in the private sector. Moreover, persons who are expected to take care of enterprises in which hundreds of crores are invested surely should be trusted not to misuse their powers on petty matters of this kind. One almost thinks that Parliament as well as government seriously attempt to apply Parkinson's Law — the less important the matter, the greater the attention which will be paid to it!

**T**his also raises another question regarding the type of accountability to Parliament that should be insisted upon. While it is a very useful thing that the Annual Reports of public enterprises and also consolidated reports such as the one annually produced by the Bureau of Public Enterprises should be available to the Parliament and Parliament should discuss the performance as indicated by these reports, it is a moot point whether detailed scrutiny which Parliament or its Committee — the Committee on Public Undertakings and the Public Accounts Committee — undertake helps or hinders better performance. It surely cannot be claimed that Parliament always has managerial or technical expertise of the required calibre. How then can the reports of such Committees be of significant use for assessing the performance of public undertakings and improving it? May it not be much better to rely on a specialised body such as the Bureau which can make periodi-



cal examinations regarding performance in terms of the charter and the objectives set before the enterprises, and present its report to Parliament? The scrutiny by Parliament or Parliamentary Committees could then be confined to an examination of these reports and a discussion on them.

**A** major area in which the Public Enterprises need expert scrutiny is that relating to their price policy and also their policy regarding output and quality of production or service. As most of them are monopolistic in character, it is essential that their prices should be subject to scrutiny by an expert body. It is also not unlikely that their consumers may not receive a fair deal. At the same time, leaving their prices to be determined by executive orders of government is neither fair to the consumer nor to the enterprises — and in the long term not to the government also. The Sachar Committee recommended in its report that the MRTP Act should apply to public sector enterprises in respect of trade practices. This would imply that public enterprises which are monopolistic in character would be subject to the discipline of enquiry by the Monopolies Commission. Whether it is this Commission or other specially constituted bodies for important sectors, what is necessary is that the price policy and dealings with consumers of these enterprises should be subjected to open public enquiries by expert bodies. This would ensure that their operations would be consumer oriented, at the same time they would be permitted to charge fair prices so that their functioning is put on a sound footing.

In spite of the impression in the public mind that labour and staff relations in public enterprises are specially bad, it needs to be noted that, as compared to the total employment provided by the public sector, the man-days lost due to labour disputes are comparatively much lower. While public sector employment (including Government Departments) has increased in the 12 years from 1966 to 1978 from 9.38 million to 14.40 million as against private sector employment of 6.81 million and 7.04 million respectively, the man-days lost due

to labour disputes in public enterprises were only 15% of the total man-days lost in organised employment in 1978. Thus, as against 67% of organised employment provided by the public sector, the percentage of man-days lost was very much smaller.<sup>6</sup>

**T**he reasons why the impression persists of specially poor staff and labour relations in the public sector is at least partly the expectation that, with ruling parties professing their faith in socialism and speaking about the public sector as an instrument of making workers genuine partners in economic management, the management of labour relations should be ideal in public sector enterprises. The poor labour relations which have prevailed in the railways for a long time, culminating in the 1974 strike and the not-so-concealed dissatisfaction after it was broken up are well known, and the series of sectional stoppages even during the Janata rule indicated that no significant improvement in labour relations was possible even under a socialist minister, and all that he did by way of ameliorative measures. Poor staff relations in the banking sector, the Life Insurance Corporation, the Indian Oil Corporation, the State Trading Corporation and in Electricity Boards practically everywhere, have been sufficiently publicised during the last few months as these have led to a considerable disruption of economic activities and hardship to the public.

As poor labour relations in public sector enterprises not only go against one of the basic objectives of setting them up but also, public enterprises being in basic economic sectors, they affect the economy far more adversely than poor labour relations in private sector enterprises, it is essential that early steps are taken to understand the reasons and take remedial action.

It needs to be noted in this context, however, that a fundamental fact of India's economic development during the last 30 years is that while, on the one side, we have provided an atmosphere which encourages the

development of free trade union activities and helps create political consciousness in the minds of workers, especially in the organised sector, on the other side, in spite of our talk of socialism and equality, little has been done effectively to reduce the vast disparities in income and wealth, the conspicuous consumption of the well to do sections and the unduly high rewards for top personnel unrelated to the remuneration necessary for obtaining that work in the Indian context.

**T**he result of these factors has been that, even though industrial employment has increased in many sectors, especially organised ones, and labour is less exploited today than it was before Independence, there is greater dissatisfaction. In many industries, due to inflationary factors, real wages have not been maintained. Disparity in wage rates abound as between organised public and private sector industries — especially at the supervisory and higher levels. Even in the public sector, there are disparities between central public enterprises and State government enterprises, and also between workers employed in different organisations even in the central sector itself. Inadequate attention has been given to looking at such matters in good time and, taking steps before agitations begin, to reduce such anomalies. As is not unusual with government agencies, nothing much is done till dissatisfaction spreads and agitational methods are adopted.

The significant cultural and linguistic gap that prevails between the workers and the so called officers, and the comparatively poor chances of mobility from the ranks of workers to higher positions, have helped to continue the feeling of alienation that most workers have against management, irrespective of the fact that the enterprises are publicly owned. In many cases, personnel management is assigned little importance in the hierarchy of management, and not many enterprises have adequately trained, imaginative and long standing personnel managers with sufficient authority in the councils of management. The idea of workers' participation in management has been discussed for quite some time, and sometimes an at-

<sup>6</sup> Economic Times — 26th May, 1979



tempt is even made to have consultative councils, but there is little genuine acceptance of the concept either on the part of management or on the part of workers. Leave aside the workers and supervisors, even junior officers in many public enterprises feel neglected and cut off from higher management as a result of the bureaucratic traditions that dominate their top management and the fact that a number of top executives do not rise from within the enterprises but are brought from outside, many times without any previous experience of handling large organisations with a number of employees.

To add to these difficulties, under the name of co-ordination, labour disputes and labour relations are not left to be handled by the managements of enterprises. Thus the latter find that their hands are tied by various directives that are issued to them by the government, usually through the Bureau of Public Enterprises. Thus, in 1971-72, a directive was issued by the Government of India that, in large scale wage revisions etc., the Ministry of Finance and the concerned Ministry should be consulted and their consent obtained. As far as possible, the enterprises were advised, the existing wage agreements should continue and, if revision is unavoidable, government should be consulted before any commitments are made. At the same time, 'responsibility for the soundness of the proposals' is expected to be borne by the managements, even though no proposals can be accepted except by approval of government at the highest level.

It appears that increasingly there is an attempt to introduce some kind of uniformity not necessarily in wage and salary levels as in the increases of additions granted, and this leads to both delays in negotiations and considerable disaffection. The better organised units are able to get wage revisions which break through such limits, as the steel and coal workers did recently, and then other workers also began to demand that they should not be held back to the fixed limits. Many times, when workers' wages are revised or allowances increased

the relativities between different categories of workers, and those between workers and their supervisors including junior officers, get disturbed, and the latter find that management is not able or not in a position to accede to their demands. Many times the negotiations cannot be completed by the enterprise managements, and the matter has to be taken up directly with the government, with persons like secretaries of ministries, the Cabinet Secretary or ministers getting involved. Recently this seems to have become almost the normal pattern, and the trade unions have begun to take it for granted that negotiations will have to be held with the government rather than with the managements of enterprises. This cannot but lead to both demoralisation in the top managements of enterprises, and to poor labour relations, as labour leaders will no longer think that they have to deal with their own managers.

While the government attempts to lay down certain limits for wage increases can be understood—guidelines for wage revisions are being attempted even in developed countries such as the U.K. and the U.S.A.—what is overlooked is that such an approach cannot be confined only to public sector enterprises. If there is an overall policy on wages and prices, public enterprises as well as private ones will have to be guided by it. To expect, however, that only public sector enterprises can effect limited wage revisions while the private sector managements and trade unions can be left free to decide the matter by mutual negotiations is to expect the impossible.

The same wrong attitude of the government is to be observed when it comes to matters like bonus where the expectation seems to be that, while bonus can be paid even by loss-making enterprises in the private sector and even by public enterprises organised in a corporate form, departmental enterprises can be excluded just because they happen to be government departments. Such anomalies cannot but lead to considerable disaffection. The worst example of this is to be found in workers working side by side, belong-

ing to different organisations and getting paid differently. This is found, for example, in railway sidings of steel plants where the railway workers allege that their emoluments are lower than those of steel plant workers. The personnel of the Industrial Security Force allege that their remuneration is much lower than their counterparts in the enterprises which they are guarding. Ignoring such problems is bound to prove short-sighted and cannot but lead to explosive situations and adversely affect the functioning of the economy. This is what has been observed during the last year or so. It is obvious that whichever government comes to power next year, unless it is an authoritarian one which tries to suppress all legitimate trade union activity, it will have to take early steps to remove such anomalies.

Even outside the period of the Emergency, government authorities have sometimes attempted to break the associations or unions of State enterprise employees by using government's sovereign powers. This cannot but leave a long trail of bitterness. If government and the union cannot come to an agreement, the least the government can do, if it wants to avoid a shutdown, is to accept arbitration. But, many times, government authorities have refused to accept this way out, or even refused to abide by the recommendations of expert bodies appointed by them, or by arbitrators' awards. Use of coercive powers, without accepting compulsory arbitration, can hardly lead to good labour relations.

The question that government and Parliament will have to firmly and clearly decide is whether public enterprises can be expected to operate very differently in a milieu which is essentially not egalitarian but almost fully capitalistic. Either the government attempts to lay down and enforce an overall egalitarian policy, in which case public enterprise managers as well as workers can be expected to accept certain limitations on their remuneration and other benefits, in keeping with such an overall policy. But if



the government fails to adopt such a policy or effectively to enforce it, to expect that only public enterprise employees will behave in a different manner is to live in an unreal world and this will only harm the efficient performance of these enterprises and therefore of the economy as a whole. High wage and salary islands are certainly reprehensible, but such islands have to be taken care of wherever they exist—including the real incomes of professionals, politicians, property holders and business executives in the private sector.

Once the idea that guidelines regarding income and wage policy can be laid down by the government for all organised sectors is accepted, and to the extent that it is accepted, public enterprise management may be expected to follow them. It is, however, essential that the negotiations should be left to the managements of enterprises, and a feeling should not be permitted to be created, as has been more frequently happening recently, that critical decisions can be taken only in New Delhi and not by the management. Only then can the management enjoy the necessary respect and authority when dealing with their employees.

**A**nother question that is becoming important, especially with the increasing number of public enterprises and their employees, is that of the political rights of these employees. The conduct rules in many cases deny to these employees rights of participating in political activities on par with the other citizens. While the question whether even civil servants at junior level should have to face such restrictions is a matter of debate, to deny such rights to those working in the enterprises is obviously unjust. This will almost mean that when an enterprise gets nationalised, its employees would lose the political rights that they enjoyed before nationalisation. This would surely not be a desirable phenomenon, especially in a country where the scope of the public sector is expected to expand substantially. It appears that some courts of law have given decisions which support the idea that public sector employees cannot be debarred from their basic

political rights. The Rajya Sabha Committee on Subordinate Legislation also appears to have raised this question. It will be useful if the government tackles this matter on its own initiative instead of as usual waiting for an agitation to develop before conceding the demand.

**T**he impression that the public sector is doing specially badly, sometimes almost deliberately cultivated by spokesmen of private business, and unwittingly and unthinkingly spread by some government spokesmen, has no real basis. What is happening, however, is that, in common with the overall deterioration in discipline and law and order, the efficiency of public enterprises is also suffering, especially as these units operate in critical areas and also operate many times in all parts of the country<sup>7</sup>, the public gets the impression that something is very wrong with the public sector enterprises and their efficiency is very low as compared to those in the private sector.

A careful comparison would easily show that there is no basis for such conclusions. What is true, however, is that much more is expected of the public enterprises, both because they operate in critical areas of the economy and because they have large amounts of public funds invested in them. Unless they play a pioneering role, whether in efficient performance and capital accumulation, treatment to consumers, relations with and participation of workers, balanced regional development, or technology break-through, the economy of the country as a whole will suffer and the peaceful transformation which is the aim of India's development effort will not succeed. That is why the problems affecting their efficiency need to be tackled early and solutions long debated should be genuinely accepted by all the parties, with the discipline and self denial that is involved in the process.

<sup>7</sup> Thus it is well known that a large part of the blame for the poor performance of BCCL and other coal companies as well as the Railways in the Bengal-Bihar areas has to be put on the general deterioration of law and order and the corruption as well as mafia like organisations that are operating there.



# Non-aligned mutations

ROMESH THAPAR

DURING nineteen seventy-nine, we have heard many a qualifying statement in discussion about India's non-alignment, considered by some as a policy and by others as a mere posture. Invariably, the words 'so-called' or 'genuine' were used to imply a dissatisfaction with the manner in which the policy was handled or interpreted in an increasingly complex international situation, a situation entirely different from the earlier one of cold war between hostile blocs. Neither the controversies nor the confusion is exclusive to India. Burma withdrew from the non-aligned group, after the Havana Conference, perhaps as a result of how it saw the future of non-alignment. The despair of the non-aligned nations is by now a global phenomenon, and likely to persist until

we can sort out the tangled mess of relationships which cut across regions, ideologies and even long-term national interests.

When we view the world from Delhi, what do we see? The two super powers compelled to discipline their over-kill capacities, through one level of arms limitation to another. The old blocs in various stages of disruption. China and the Soviet Union, Vietnam and China, Japan and the USA, the European Community and the USA, the USA and Cuba/Nicaragua/Bolivia, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia/Rumania/Poland, Black and White Africa, and the Arab lands. The many contradictions inherent in these situations provide a backdrop to all international confabulations and conferences on 'detentes', 'new



transitional politics of today, a state of affairs which is likely to be reflected in a rather prolonged and enervating phase of anarchic coalition politics at the centre of federal power. It is difficult to be precise about the ability of the Indian mind to adjust to a scenario in which no single party's will prevails over our continental politics. It will be a long and arduous process for a continental polity, and with many ups and downs. No simplistic, characteristic or control-oriented solutions will work. And if these are attempted, they will have great potential for doing damage to the federal polity.

We can only suggest that in this period we need an infrastructure which assists the processes of policy formulation consistent with the interests of the nation, the region and the vast areas of the world yet to see full development. With imagination and sensitivity, we have to bring into operation a high-powered council of distinguished professionals who are able to coordinate the many elements which fuse to give substance and credibility to a policy. We cannot afford any longer to procrastinate on this urgent matter, or to shelve it with vague proposals for policy planning outfits.

A National Security Council, embracing permanent cadres and outside expertise, will have to view in depth and perspective our defence and foreign policy compulsions in the context of the economic strengths available to the nation. It will also provide the most effective continuity in a transitional political situation like the one we are in at this time. And it will lift these crucial matters out of the arena of political horse-trading—a very important consideration now that we know what ambitious and reckless politicians are capable of doing to the best of policies.

Of course, it can be argued that no real change is possible in the quality of India's foreign policy until major steps have been taken to remedy the economic and political fragmentation and to establish the framework for a fresh federal consensus which recognises the articulation of India's new ambitions. The prob-

lem is not exclusive to our country. It is shared by most of our non-aligned allies. They have become victims of imitative economic models which have failed to lessen their dependence on the favours of the super powers and their 'hinterlands'. The resulting crises which have overtaken so many non-aligned societies in Asia, Africa and Latin America destroyed the credibility of leadership in the Third World and also deeply damaged the clarity and decisiveness so necessary for a bold and qualitative correction.

In this context, it is claimed that so long as the internal situation of India remains 'soft' and vulnerable—as can be seen from the many repercussions that are bound to flow from the drought crisis, affecting both urban and rural areas and raising questions about the stability and effectiveness of governmental authority, and the leadership remains divorced from the realisation of an urgent need to attend to ground-level tasks—there cannot possibly be any major assertion of national, regional or group interests. India will be reduced to an impotent witness of lobbying, internally and externally, of powerful international vested interests. However, the validity of this argument is weakening as we enter the eighties. The national crisis is no longer one of 'leadership', but of 'the system'. This growing consciousness is going to make the play between domestic and foreign policy very much more active, and with the one influencing the other to an equal extent.

Let us explain this in simpler equations. The recognition, now fairly widespread and in sharp contrast to the Nehruvian perspectives of the fifties, that we have to texture a humane society of some 1000 million people, is compelling us to revise our imitative models of development. Now, we have to search out ways of moulding workable, creative, dignified, just and sovereign living which cuts the waste embodied in so-called affluence to the minimum, and can in many ways skirt the despair and alienation of the runaway consumer societies. This is no easy task, for the sickness of so-called affluence is hidden under many layers of make-belief, but continental communities

like the Indian and Chinese (representing, let it be repeated, a majority of mankind!) cannot survive in health without an alternative social texturing and value system. The thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi and Chairman Mao, based on a close study of the surrounding reality, are not all that apart in perspectives.

Increasingly, and despite aberrations, the continental communities of India and China have no choice but to experiment in forms and styles of living which will both insulate them from the accepted norms of development and from the shock waves rocking the conforming world. In other words, it is likely that massive internal compulsions will, in Asia, force us all to turn our attention to soft borders, detentism and regional consolidation—in fact, bringing some urgent order into the present disarray. The eighties will unfold in this kind of environment. The status quoists, who use the word 'non-alignment' as a *mantra*, are unable to understand the mutations taking place in India's external actions. These mutations will ultimately transform the foreign policy of India into a more significant intervention in the interests of what is described as the Third World.

That this process had to begin belatedly in the period 1977-1979, should not surprise us. The vacuum in India following bankruptcy and collapse of the continental political alliance represented by the Congress Party was sought to be filled by another party hastily put together. Despite the political upsurge following the Emergency, the Janata Party remained a northern manifestation—and that, too, in a rather fractured condition. The coalition culture which is bound to dominate the Centre will speed—and, perhaps, shorten—the transitions in India's foreign policy. This does not mean that national interest will be endangered or sacrificed. On the contrary, a more careful consensus will mature among the several forces which reflect the thinking of a newly awakened sub-continent.

This is the lesson of 1979. Only the rigid or the dishonest lobbyists fail to take note of it. They do so at considerable risk to their relevance.



# Islam's new postures

BHARAT WARIAVWALLA

HISTORIANS lose when they fight against the myth makers of history. For one, history is an enterprise, for the other history is an experience handed down by one generation to another. There is a historical myth believed by the Hindus that a thousand years of Muslim rule was oppressive. Proselytization, desecration of temples, rape of women are some of the images that come to the

Hindu mind when it recalls that period of the past. It is futile arguing with those who insist on seeing history not the way it happened but the way it should have happened. A historian's reconstruction of an event or an epoch that deeply touches people is always at odds with the way it is understood by those people. A J P Taylor can well demonstrate that Hitler was not a



Satan But that won't change the Englishman's perception that he was Or, will an average Greek believe that his Ottoman rulers were greatly civilized and tolerant? Historical events that vastly change the course of lives of peoples are seldom understood from history books They are recounted by one generation to another complete with all the embellishments and distortions

The secular-minded among the Hindus are a little more discerning in their knowledge of the Muslim period than the religious ones Nehru's *Discovery of India* is one attempt at looking at history from the vantage point of liberalism For Nehru, the foremost author of the liberal secular credo, Akbar was tolerant and Aurangzeb a bigot For another, secularist H N Bahuguna, even Aurangzeb was basically tolerant of Hinduism History is now rewritten by politicians in the midst of their electioneering Thus the great secularist Mrs Gandhi admits that she erred in attempting to change the status of the Aligarh Muslim University And out of 'concern for Muslim welfare' the Congress-I leader has now made common cause with the Shahi Imam of Jamma Masjid Secularists and men of god have joined hands to rid the country of 'communalism'

I don't know what the term secularism as used by our politicians means But if the credo was meant to divorce the affairs of State from religion, then we better take a good look at affairs both at home and abroad where some States claim to be guided by faith

Is Imam Ayatollah Khomeini the new Iranian Savanrola or is he a radical who is simply using religion to bring about a new egalitarian order? Is General Zia just an autocrat in the old mould who manipulates religious symbols for power ends or is he really bent on ushering in 'Nizam-e-Mustafa' (Islamic order or Islamic system)? Both represent Islam in power When not in power, Islam provides a powerful base for political action to those who wish to challenge un-Islamic regimes, as in Iran under the Shah and in Afghanistan today

Islam shapes politics, even attire — Malaysian girl students who left home for England in mini-skirts returned wearing veils No other religion today has such an impact on politics as Islam Christianity had it until the birth of the nation-States in Europe which drew a clearer line between what was God's and what was Caesar's Various explanations have been put forward for the resurgence of Islam but I find all of them inadequate

The break-neck speed of modernization, as in the Shah's Iran is offered as one common explanation for the coming of the Khomeini regime Rapid economic growth accelerated social dislocations, wide disparity between urban and rural incomes (a ratio of five to one) attracted rural labour to the cities, weakening traditional family structures and further depleting the agricultural sector Nor did the urban proletariat and the middle classes become really better off Congested cities, appalling housing and inflation were the consequences of oil-fueled growth<sup>1</sup> The real beneficiary of the economic boom was the upper 10 per cent of the population which accounted for 40% of the consumption The venality, depravity and ostentation of this class made them appear in the eyes of the larger populace as pariahs and allies of the super pariah, the Shah Thus, the standard explanation for the Shah's fall and Khomeini's rise is the indiscriminate westernization and rapid modernization of Iran

Which country on its way to modernization has not experienced in varying degrees what the Shah's Iran did? Czarist Russia as a result of industrialization, too, experienced social and economic dislocations at the turn of the century But there it was the Bolsheviks who eventually triumphed, not the Russian patriarch The military dictatorships of Brazil and South Korea have also forced rapid economic growth, but there the challenge to the regimes comes primarily from liberals and the Left, not from religious groups Turkey's example is a little closer to Iran's Rapid growth accompanied by gross

income disparities initially brought some rich electoral dividends to the fundamentalist National Salvation Party, but today in Turkey the Islamic fundamentalists have beaten a retreat, as the recent election shows

The Khomeini revolution was unique Exiled for fourteen years, without an organization and without firing a shot, the Ayatollah deposed the monarch The uniqueness of the Iranian revolution cannot wholly be explained by socio-economic factors which are common to any political upheaval A part of the explanation lies in the relationship between Islam and politics It is this relationship that accounts for the vitality and continued relevance of Islam to the politics of the Muslim States

Like Catholicism, but unlike Hinduism and Buddhism, Islam has a teleological view of history Dar-ul-Islam and the city of God of St Augustine are the perfect polity men must strive to attain on earth Worldly society has divine purpose For the high priest of another secular religion, Marx, the creation of the the classless society was the final end of men's endeavour Its chiliasm, its absence of distinction between the lay and the religious leader and its stress on equality, readily makes Islam the font of sweeping social and political upheavals

The early phases of the nationalist and anti-West struggles in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Syria, Indonesia were led by religious groups Religious leaders fought to rid their societies of the corrupting influences of the infidels of the West, so that they could rebuild an Islamic order. The nationalists, like Nasser, Ben Bella or Jinnah, on the other hand, cynically manipulated religious symbols in order to create modern nation-States Kings and clergies clashed—Nasser against the Moslem Brotherhood, Jinnah and the successive Pakistani leaders against the Jamat ul-Ulema-i-Islam and the Jamat-ul-ulema-i-Pakistan, Sukarno against Nabdatul Ulema, Ayatollah against the Shah and, recently, against Bazargan

<sup>1</sup> See *Strategic Survey* (London) 1978, pp 50-57

There is a hazard in gauging the strength of a faith Fifty years after



the end of the French revolution, the public buildings in Paris still displayed the motto 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' Little now remains of the revolutionary Bolshevik doctrine, except ritual incantations, but that still is the only source of legitimacy of the Soviet rulers It is entirely possible that the revolution of the Ayatollahs in Iran will collapse when the Leftists and liberals become thoroughly alienated by Khomeini's clergymen, when the economy comes to a dead stop, when Kurds and the Azerbaijanis mount offensives and when the soldiers regroup against the mullahs Fundamentalism may never be able to consolidate power What Fouad Ajami says of Egypt may well turn to be true of Iran 'The Moslem Brotherhood helped topple the monarch, but it soon became the victim and target of the new regime Fundamentalism supplies the fervour, some of the committed manpower, and the willingness to take risks of political action But other characters more capable of making compromises and less likely to frighten modernized young people inherit the post revolutionary world' <sup>2</sup> An Iranian Nasser may well devour Khomeini's revolutionaries

Or is it conceivable that the protector of the Kaaba might one day be swept away by Islamic fervour? The very thought that the founder of the Wahabi movement and the bastion of Islam, can prove vulnerable to the fundamentalist upsurge, indeed, seems incredible Saudi Arabia is not Iran, many would rightly say Saudi Arabia is infinitely richer than Iran — oil revenues per person in the former is about \$ 6000 compared to only some \$ 600 in the latter Saudi Arabia is tribal, knit together only by the monarchy, Iran is multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, a class ridden society held together by the centralized power in Teheran

**Y**et, it is the sudden arrival of the oil wealth that can undermine the monarchy Profligate princes and corrupt middlemen seem so much out of place in a society that still

lives by the tribal values of austerity and piety Names of middlemen like Kashoggi and Pharoan are household words for greed and venality in Saudi Arabia today For the Saudi upper crust, their country is a kind of money-making factory whose wealth is to be carted away abroad Their home is not Saudi Arabia but California or the Riviera where their fortunes are, where their fabulous mansions are <sup>3</sup>

Then there is the monarchy and the 'California Mafia' (western educated young specialists who are not members of the royal house but who occupy leading posts in the Saudi government) whose embrace of the West can turn out to be the kiss of death Now we know how much the Iranians hate the West, and particularly the United States The destruction of American missions in Libya and Pakistan is symbolic of the deep chasm that divides Islam and the West But perhaps the Saudi tribal society will modernize without the dislocation of Iran, perhaps the Saudi monarchy will learn to use its wealth judiciously and to wield its enormous political power on behalf of the Arabs But it could fail Then the threat to the throne may well come from a Gaddafi with his brand of desert socialism, austerity and militancy against the West.

**T**he political landscape from Morocco to Indonesia disquiets an Indian liberal Why is it that a liberal democracy has just not sunk any roots in the Muslim countries? Why is it that a leader of liberal socialist persuasion like Sharpaur Bakhtiar who incidentally fought on the side of the republicans in the Spanish Civil War, seems so much out of place in Iran? It was not so much that Bakhtiar was a Kerensky who came too late after the Iranian despot had thoroughly discredited his regime His liberalism just had no appeal for the contending political factions in Iran In Pakistan, too, the choice had been between a demagogue like Bhutto, who cynically used Islamic slogans to con-

solidate his power, and a bigot like Zia, who now uses religion to buttress the socio-economic status quo

The liberal creed is alien to much of the Muslim world Why? Is it the doctrinaire nature of Islam and the absence of distinction between spiritual and temporal authority that makes it antithetical to liberalism? Or, does the absence of an all embracing doctrine and the ahistorical character of Hinduism make some of its aspects quite compatible with liberalism? We have little empirical knowledge of how religion shapes contemporary politics Political culture still remains the richest but largely unexplored area in political science

**I**ndian Muslims are too divided along class, caste and sect lines to draw inspiration from any of the fundamentalisms that are floating in West Asia today Surely the Shi'ite fundamentalism of the Iranian Ayatollahs can scarcely appeal to the Indian Sunnis Nor can Wahabi fundamentalism appeal to Indian Shi'ites Gaddafi's Islamic purity is something only the oil rich bedouins can afford Even the Egyptians next door reject it

It is the resilience of our political institutions that alone can redress the communal balance in the country, which might perhaps be aggravated a little by the Islamic resurgence in our neighbourhood But secularism as conceived and practised here only provides security to our Muslims, it fails to draw them towards modernization. Politicians professing secularism dare not think of introducing a uniform civil code for all or deny the Aligarh Muslim University its communal status To do so is to invite the charge of being anti-Muslim and risk losing Muslim votes

Just about all we have done towards establishing Hindu-Muslim harmony is coopting some secular showpieces amongst the Muslims in the power structure But, perhaps, that too became no longer profitable for our secularists So, as our political institutions became feeble and electoral competition keener, the secularists did not hesitate to

<sup>2</sup> Fouad Ajami, 'The Struggle For Egypt's Soul', *Foreign Policy*, No 35, Summer 1979, p 25

<sup>3</sup> Arnold Hottinger, 'Does Saudi Arabia Face Revolution', *The New York Review of Books*, Vol XXVI, No II (July 28, 79), pp 14-17



coopt even Muslim religious leaders into their parties. Yet, the adverse impact of Islamic resurgence in West Asia on the communal balance in India can only be redressed by a viable democratic political system. Will the January poll give one?

**T**he revival of the faith is not likely to lead to any greater unity than exists today among Islamic countries. Islam has seldom cemented political fissures. Islam does not possess the hierarchically structured centralized ecclesiastical order with a single point of decision-making that the Papacy had. It was this that made Rome's sway over western Christendom so complete. True, the soldiers of the Prophet reached Central Asia and the Gangetic plain, North Africa and Southeast Asia. Islamic expansion in the 7th and 8th centuries was remarkable. But more remarkable was the 'speed with which this Arab empire broke up, and the thoroughness with which it decolonized itself'.<sup>4</sup> Faith supplies fervour for conquests, it cannot sustain conquests which demand efficient organization. Islam never had any then, it does not have it now.

In recent years, pan-Arabism of sorts has vaguely succeeded in transcending national differences. One variety of it spawned by Nasser rested on an amalgam of Arab nationalism, socialism and a touch of religion. Of course, its strength rested on enmity with Israel and, with the devastation of the Arabs in the six-day war in 1967, the amalgam on which Nasser's pan-Arabism rested came unstuck. After 1967, Nasser himself groped for a new policy at home and abroad. His 'accidental' successor, Sadat, evolved a policy from Nasser's vague gropings. It was to be Egyptian patriotism, not pan-Arab nationalism.

Now Gaddafi claims that Nasser designated him as the trustee of pan-Arab nationalism. But, as Ajami says, Gaddafi's version of Nasserism is a desert variant that rests on high income and small population, and,

because his baggage is light, Gaddafi can usually afford to fly as high as his imagination will take him.<sup>5</sup> In his flights of fancy the Libyan leader ends up financing causes which at best are pinpricks that do not serve the pan-Arab cause — financing the Muslim rebels in the Philippines and the Irish Republican Army or giving money to General Zia for his nuclear programme. Libya's pan-Arabism has been a non-starter.

The Islamic world is not in any less of a disarray as a result of the resurgence of faith. Muslim States continue to quarrel among themselves as they have in the past — Algeria and Morocco, the two Yemens, Syria and Lebanon, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. The list is long.

**W**e have familiar problems with this world which demand, at times, unfamiliar responses. For instance, we know that the oil producers have the power to hold the world's rich and poor by the short hairs. But why do we not attempt to rally the world's poor against the unabashed greed of the oil producers? At the recent UNCTAD meeting in Manila it was the Latin Americans and the Africans who fired the first shots at the self-centredness of the oil producers. We of course did what we have been used to doing — rewriting other people's policy drafts in South-Block English.

A part of the Islamic world — South Central Asia comprising Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran — poses some security problems for us. Here the task is formidable and our resources to accomplish it meagre. We should want to prevent the balkanization of the region. To a degree we can deter Pakistan from any adventure in Afghanistan but we have no means to prevent Khomeini's Iran from supporting the anti-Amin groups. But the best guarantee against the balkanization of the region is the stability of the regimes of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. We are in no position to guarantee anyone's stability, much less our own, unless one wants the stability of the graveyard that the Congress-I leader promises.

<sup>4</sup> See Peter Brown's, superb review article, 'Understanding Islam', *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. XXVI, No. 2 (Feb 22, 79), pp. 30-32.

<sup>5</sup> *op. cit.*, note 2, p.11.



# Living with illegality

ASHOK H DESAI

IS the rule of law alien to our society? Is equality before the law a concept contrary to our traditions? Anyone who watches recent events on the political scene must wonder. The Indian political circus is full of bizarre characters including men on the flying trapeze who swing from one end to another and occasionally drop their partners in mid-air, political contortionists who can swallow their words and assume varying postures from moment to moment and court jesters in caps without bells. The patient audience has noticed this for long and, unlike editorial writers, is not surprised at the antics of the performers. But lately a new class has emerged in the arena,

namely pickpockets caught in the act or cashiers whose fingers are found in the till. Like the circus-lovers of Mugalsarai, they can pilfer a circus elephant from a moving circus train. And, yet, these performers also seem to be acclaimed as enthusiastically as the others.

The fact and the extent of violation of the law are just not in doubt. The findings against the illegality of our political leaders have been catalogued in reports of successive Commissions exposing political corruption and lack of integrity at the very highest level. The Commissions have consisted of men of the highest calibre in the judiciary, men of mo-



deration and rectitude who, if at all, have under-stated rather than exaggerated the facts. The reports have been written after giving all opportunity to the parties concerned to put forth their point of view. The findings have never been sought to be met by facts but only by bland denials. Some of our political leaders regard the rest of the public as so naive or illiterate that they even deny the existence of the findings. But these seem to have only a marginal impact on the behaviour of our political electorate. Why? Are there different standards of behaviour for the rulers and the ruled?

Everyone is for the rule of law. That is sufficiently alarming to make one examine the term critically. The term has become a catch phrase like 'socialism' which found in India the largest mass conversion since the Bishop of Shanghai used a fire hose to baptise his flock. A part of the ambiguity arises from the very term 'law' itself. Pascal's law cannot be violated. Penal law can be violated but there will be punishment for it in this world. The law of piety can be violated but the punishment for it would, presumably, follow in the after world.

'Law' is used in varying senses.<sup>1</sup> The law of science is a descriptive abbreviation of observable facts. It cannot be 'broken' as such, for on being broken it is improved upon. The law of a legislature is prescriptive. Its essence is the possibility of violation with sanction to back it in the form of punishment or of enforcement of rights.

The higher law is an appeal to social conscience or aspirations or transcendent authority. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was appealing to such a law when, at the end of the trial resulting in his conviction, he stated, 'In spite of the verdict of the jury, I still maintain that I am innocent. There are higher powers that rule the destinies of men and nations and I think it may be the will of Providence that the cause I represent, may be benefited by my suffering than by my pen and tongue.'

<sup>1</sup> Popper *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Chapter 5

The concept of law gathers further ambiguity which becomes particularly relevant in the Indian context. One rendition of 'law' is 'dharma', a noble word with a host of meanings of which more later. The phrase 'rule of law' also has a flexible connotation which is affected by this ambiguity. It means compliance with law. But what if the law itself is arbitrary?

The classic exposition of the concept in its three aspects is by A. V. Dicey in his *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*. In its first aspect 'it means, in the first place, the absolute supremacy or pre-dominance of regular law as opposed to the influence of the arbitrary power, and excludes the existence of arbitrariness, of prerogative and even of wide discretionary authority on the part of the Government'. The second aspect is that it 'means equality before the law, or the equal subjection of all classes of the ordinary law of the land administered by ordinary law courts'. The third aspect given by Dicey, namely, that the Constitution is a result of the ordinary law of the land has very little relevance to the Indian Constitution.

Dicey's definition has been battered by later criticism particularly in regard to detail.<sup>2</sup> But the first two principles, namely, the supremacy of regular law against the influence of arbitrary power and equality before the law, with all their qualifications, still form the basis of a democratic polity. It is in this very sense that our courts have adopted the concept of the rule of law. In the words of the Supreme Court,

'Our federal structure is grounded on certain fundamental principles and (3) the rule of law which includes judicial review of arbitrary executive action'. In that case the Supreme Court cited and adapted the first aspect of the rule of law propounded by Dicey.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Administrative Law H. W. R. Wade, Chapter 2

<sup>3</sup> State of Madhya Pradesh vs. Bharat Singh AIR 1967 Supreme Court 1170 at 1173.

In a recent judgment, Mr. Justice Bhagwati of the Supreme Court stated 'Whatever be the concept of the rule of law, whether it be the meaning given by Dicey in his *The Law of the Constitution* or the definition given by Hayek in his *Road to Serfdom* and *Constitution of Liberty* or the exposition set forth by Harry Jones in his *The Rule of Law and the Welfare State*, there is, as pointed out by Mathew, J., in his article on "The welfare state, rule of law and natural justice" in *Democracy, Equality and Freedom*, "substantial agreement in juristic thought that the great purpose of the rule of law notion is the protection of the individual against arbitrary exercise of power, wherever it is found". It is indeed unthinkable that in a democracy governed by the rule of law the executive government or any of its officers should possess arbitrary power over the interests of the individual. Every action of the executive government must be informed with reason and should be free from arbitrariness. That is the very essence of the rule of law and its bare minimal requirement. And to the application on this principle it makes no difference whether the exercise of the power involves affectation of some right or denial of some privilege'.<sup>3a</sup>

The question then is, how is it that we fail to be outraged by unimpeachable findings that our politicians are dishonest? How is it that public opinion accepts leaders who are condemned by their own colleagues as having violated the law blatantly? Why do our editors grovel before the dishonest and the corrupt? It cannot merely be explained by the suggestion that the opinion-makers are cowards or hope to share the booty. After all,

'You cannot hope to bribe or twist

(Thank God!) the Indian Journalist

But, seeing what the man will do,  
Unbribed, there is no occasion to'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3a</sup> Ramana v/s International Airport Authority of India

<sup>4</sup> Adaption of a poem of Humbert Wolfe



There is perhaps a more fundamental question, namely, our attitude to illegality in high places

**T**he rule of law cannot mean just formal compliance with the law. For, laws of unjust men are unjust. In fact, the normal requirement of observing the letter of the law is given its utmost significance by the authoritarian groups. This is because the modern State is so complex a machine that it is difficult to dislodge a person who refuses to get off the driver's seat and pulls a gun. A pliant legislature can make it possible for the leader to change the law. It may not be cricket but a ruthless leader can declare a 'no ball' after the stumps have been knocked out. The support of the civil service, the army and of the articulate middle classes can be assured only if there is a formal compliance with the law. The Indian mind understands this very well. The school of philosophy of Jaimini's *Purva-mimansa Sutra* or *karma mimansa* emphasises the formal word and the precise ritual.

This is why Mrs Gandhi was keen on maintaining the facade by a formal adherence to law throughout the Emergency. The Emergency was clearly declared to subserve her personal ends. (It is astonishing how any sober critic who has read chapter 5 of the Shah Commission report can still maintain that the Emergency was declared with good cause. The chapter gives the whole line of events for six months prior to the declaration of the Emergency including declining prices and a stable law and order situation to nail the lie that the Emergency was declared because of internal disturbances. But since the sobriety of our critics cannot be challenged, one can only wonder about their literacy.)

In order to comply with the form and maintain legitimacy, Mrs Gandhi used law as an instrument to destroy the rule of law. For, the rule of law means a fair government without arbitrariness. It postulates a free press, an articulate Parliament and an independent judiciary. These were sought to be controlled by a

succession of legislative measures. The Constitution was amended by three significant amendments, namely, the 38th (President's decision of, Emergency conclusive), the 39th (election of the Prime Minister above the law courts) and the 42nd Amendment (wide ranging erosion of civil liberties).

The Maintenance of Internal Security Act was amended by the amendments, 1975 and 1976, to make it possible to have repeated orders of detention and to bar disclosure of the grounds of detention. Election laws were amended by the Election Law (Amendment) Act, 1975, Representation of the Peoples' Ordinance of 1977 and Disputed Elections (Prime Minister and Speaker) Ordinance 1977. The press was muzzled by the Press Council (Repeal) Act, 1976, the Prevention of Publication of Objectionable Matters Act, 1976, Parliamentary Proceedings (Protection of publication) Repeal Act, 1976.

The laws were passed when Parliament was disabled by the detention of the leaders of the opposition, the press was gagged and the judiciary rendered ineffective. Thus could the form of law be used to destroy the rule of law. But it was vital to gain the loyalty of the civil service, the army and the 'law' abiding citizen.

**T**he thorough investigation of the abuse of authority, excesses and malpractices during the Emergency is reflected by the detailed and specific report of Justice Shah. He points out how dishonesty and falsehood became almost a way of official life during the Emergency. 'Arbitrariness and reckless disregard of the rights of the others and consequent misery which characterised a number of actions of different public servants over a period of nearly 19 months, terrorised the citizens resulting in a complete loss of faith of the people in the fairness and objectivity of the administration generally.'

The rebuttal of a meticulous report could be given only if the details were squarely met one after the other. Of course, it is true that there was lesser need for the rebuttal since

the Janata Government did not have the courage or the farsightedness to publicise the report or take prompt legal action. But, Mrs Gandhi's reply was meant to take her public for granted. On September 30, 1979, she declared at Madras that the Shah Commission Report was a great joke and the government could have taken films of the proceedings and of the Commissions appointed against her and show them to the people for entertainment. A complete refutation of the detailed 400 page analysis of arbitrariness by dissolving her audience into laughter.

**T**he response to the Gupta Commission is even more interesting. The Commission directly deals with the adventures of the Maruti Companies to build an inexpensive car for the poor of India. Justice Gupta of the Supreme Court submitted his report on 31st May, 1979 at a point of time when the Janata Government was still in power. The government could have promptly published the report and taken follow up action. But our time scale does not permit such unseemly hurry. Morarji Desai's government pondered on the report while civil servants who might have been hurt by the disclosures were writing copious notes on it. In the meantime, Charan Singh manipulated his way to power. He was not certain about his attitude towards Mrs. Gandhi who had selflessly helped him to attain his lifelong ambition.

The report itself disclosed connivance of ministers who were now respectably entrenched in the cabinet including T A Pai and C Subramaniam. Charan Singh's government was also dithering over whether the report should be published or not. By now the Janata President, Chandrashekhar, found it a convenient weapon to embarrass the new government with and announced that the Janata Party would disclose the report chapter by chapter. It was this threat which precipitated government into publishing the report.

The report gives fascinating details about the way in which a young entrepreneur with proper connections could push through a project



which was not feasible, got a car certified which was not genuine, land allotted which was required for defence purposes and capital raised from gentlemen who were reluctant to participate in the deal

**T**he report has numerous appendices including photostats of letters for Maruti written by Sanjay Gandhi who never signed in full but merely followed the practice of kings and emperors to initial with a scrawl. In fact, Justice Gupta concluded

'The affairs of the Maruti concerns described in the previous chapters appear to have brought about a decline in the integrity of public life and sullied the purity of administration. Legal and other requirements were brushed aside and accepted norms of behaviour were forgotten on many occasions when the interest of a Maruti company was involved. This was due to, as witness after witness repeated, an atmosphere of fear then prevailing, anything connected with the Maruti concerns was looked upon as a 'sensitive matter'. And the fear was real. Threat of detention under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act or a CBI inquiry or other forms of harassment made it hazardous for the officers to insist on the rules or the dealers and depositors to insist on their rights. Persons in public life were in danger of having their political careers ruined. That it was not an idle threat is proved by instances of persons in whose case the threat was carried out. Some of the officers who went out of their way to be helpful to Maruti have denied that they were under any fear or pressure. What then made them act in the way they did? No evidence has been found that any other kind of inducement was held out to them, and it is difficult to get direct evidence in such matters. In their case it may have been only a hope that in future, if an occasion arose, the services rendered by them would be remembered. It may have been power-worship which blurs judgment and makes one believe that the present trends will continue and whoever is in

power at the moment is invincible. They could not enforce the laws against those who appeared to be the law's masters'

A naive outsider would have thought that such a report would conclude the political career of the family. This would have been an un-Indian reaction. The first question was of form and not of substance. What was in issue was not the illegality but the manner in which the report was published. So we saw a controversy worthy of a *puṇic* debate on religious doctrines. Chandrashekhar was to be hauled over the coals because he had dared to disclose the report which was not yet laid on the table of the House. Antulay, Sathe and other knights-at-arms were all set to try Chandrashekhar for breach of privilege of Parliament. They did not think it necessary to explain for a moment how their leaders happened to violate the law. Mrs Gandhi was even more subtle. She pointed out how none of the documents attributed to Sanjay Gandhi were signed by him. Quite. Thus a report containing unassailable material showing violation of a host of laws was sought to be drowned in arguments about the manner of publishing it.

**B**y this time the Janata Party also felt uneasy that it had not done its bit about knocking the law about a bit. The common dramatist persona both in the Shah, the Gupta and the Reddy Commissions, is Bansilal who treated Haryana like his ancestral zamindari correcting his errant flock with occasional detentions and chastisements. In a way, the report of the Reddy Commission makes more depressing reading because even the necessity of maintaining the form was given up in Haryana. Bansilal was prosecuted by the Janata Government of Devi Lal. After Devi Lal's defection, Bhajan Lal became the Janata Chief Minister of Haryana. A few days before the Assembly was to meet for a vote of confidence, Bhajan Lal was struck by lightning and his scrutiny of the existing cases against Bansilal convinced him that there was no substance in the cases specified by the Reddy Commission.

This would normally be a matter to be decided by a court. But obviously Bhajan Lal was animated by the noble impulse that good citizens like Bansilal should not be dragged through the mire of police courts particularly when something might be found out. Hence the government decided to withdraw the four cases in gross violation of the spirit if not the content of section 321 of the Criminal Procedure Code relating to withdrawal of prosecutions. It was an action sufficiently outrageous to evoke the condemnation of the Bar and a sophisticated defence by Chandrashekhar.

**T**his attitude to the rule of law has its roots in our approach to law and legality. Even though a detailed analysis may be postponed, it would be useful to point out some of the principal features of the landscape. The first is that the ambiguity about the concept of 'law' discussed above is accentuated by the idea of *dharma*. It is derived from *dhru* or 'to hold'. '*Dharma* means literally that which lays hold of and which holds things together, the law, the norm, the rule of nature, action and life'<sup>5</sup>. But its connotation includes not merely law, usage, practice, customs, ordinance, statute but also religion, virtue, righteousness, good work, duty, piety, propriety, decorum, morality, ethics, nature, disposition, character, essential quality, peculiarity, manner, among several other shades of meaning<sup>6</sup>.

In this great spectrum, one slides from a binding law to the concept of a desirable virtue. Therefore, the concept of law is not confined to a prescription which must be followed but also includes an aspiration or a desirable norm. The violation of such a concept is not by itself something which can be regarded as attracting penal or even severe consequences. It is not unusual at parties to hear strangers boast about having gone abroad after having fabricated health certificates or about having purchased smuggled articles.

5 Aurobindo *Essays on Gita* Chapter 3

6 Apte Sanskrit-English Dictionary .



Such infraction is also common in the West. But it would not be a matter of boasting except amongst the inner councils of a mafia. This very attitude towards law as a norm and not a command affects our approach. Other things being equal, it is desirable to follow the norm. But its violation is not a breach of our compact with society.

**T**he second feature is the hierarchical nature of our society where, in the early times, the impact of law depended on the status of the transgressor. The code which had the most lasting impact, namely, the Institutes of Manu, gives a fairly detailed analysis of crime including the mental element — a concept unusual for 9th century B.C. But the substantive criminal jurisprudence of Manu is grossly unequal in the description of the offences and the apportionment of the sentence. According to him the gravity of the crime varies with the caste of the offender as does the sentence.

Manu's code shows a sophisticated distinction between casual offenders and hardened offenders and gives a whole range of punishment from general admonition to corporal punishment. It admonishes against unjust punishment. But the punishment actually meted out depends on the status of the felon. Protection given to Brahmins is paramount. It may be that they are expected to maintain a higher standard of rectitude. But 'Never shall the king slay a Brahmin, though convicted of all possible crimes. Let him banish the offender from his realm but with all his property secure and his body unhurt'.<sup>7</sup>

The Muslim criminal law which followed, sought to introduce equality at the cost of unusual harshness. Confronted by these earlier systems which they could not even understand, the first Indian Law Commission presided over by Lord Macaulay started with a clean slate and did not draw on the Indian experience. 'Under these circumstances we have not thought it desirable to take as the ground work of the Code any of the

systems of law now in force in any part of India'.<sup>8</sup>

But the deep underlying current still remains. A ruler is not regarded as subject to the same scrutiny as the ruled.

The third factor is the pervasiveness of castes which gives a different impetus for legitimacy and respectability in the society. I remember being astonished when informed that a leading financier who was convicted of an impressive assortment of offences ranging from forgery to criminal breach of trust, would be able to find a bride from a very 'respectable family' for the arranged marriage of his son. One wondered how this was possible when the man was convicted and used to spend days in jails in between his visits to law courts. But the answer is simple.

The convict had always been very considerate to his caste. If any company in which he was interested was failing, he would see to it that the members of his caste were refunded the deposits before the general collapse of the company. He also employed them on liberal service conditions. Thus he remained loyal, faithful and honest to his caste which entitled him to the highest regard from his caste in this life and the hopes of the highest rewards in the after-life unaffected by the protests of a few unfeeling outsiders who had sent him to jail. Evidently, it is far more important to be thought of well in the caste than obey the general law.

**T**he fourth factor is dynastic loyalty accepted as an imperative norm. The Indian society is dynastic not merely in formal adherence but in its deepest motivation. It is right that a mother should encourage her son to embark on an enterprise which would relieve the transport bottlenecks in the country. And it is not merely Mrs. Gandhi who is animated by this overwhelming desire. Even Morarji Desai and Jagjivan Ram with every possible warning not to get involved in the sidewash of their sons' activities could not avoid the risk.

All leaders refer to the ideal of Ramrajya. Rama regarded it right to banish his wife whom he knew to be of impeccable virtue because of the rumours against her chastity. A good king may have to be a bad husband. However, the concept that Caesar's wife must be above suspicion applies to the wife and not to the son. (The only short term solution would appear to follow the model of Byzantine civil service where eunuchs, without the pride of ancestry or the hope of posterity, alone were allowed to man the civil service.) Thus it is not outrageous that a few standards may be thrown overboard if the son is to be made secure.

**L**astly, an unfortunate by-product of the Gandhian civil disobedience movement is the willingness of our leaders to violate the law without understanding their Master's cheerful willingness to accept the maximum punishment. In 1922, at Ahmedabad, Gandhiji was convicted of sedition for three articles he had written in *Young India*. Gandhiji was asked if he wanted to make any statement. He told Judge Broomfield that he had deliberately violated the law and if the judge was an upholder of the law, he must pass the severest sentence on an implacable opponent of the British.

Before reading his prepared written text he said,

'Before I read this statement, I would like to state that I entirely endorse the learned Advocate-General's remarks in connection with my humble self. I think that he was entirely fair to me in all the statements that he has made, because it is very true and I have no desire whatsoever to conceal from this court the fact that to preach disaffection towards the existing system of government has become almost a passion with me, and the learned Advocate-General is also entirely in the right when he says that my preaching of disaffection did not commence with my connection with *Young India*, but that it commenced much earlier, and in the statement that I am about to read, it will be my painful duty

<sup>7</sup> Institutes of Manu-Chapter VIII v 880

<sup>8</sup> Prefatory address First Indian Law Commission



to admit before this court that it commenced much earlier than the period stated by the Advocate-General. It is the most painful duty with me, but I have to discharge that duty knowing the responsibility that rests upon my shoulders, and I wish to endorse all the blame that the learned Advocate-General has thrown on my shoulders in connection with the Bombay occurrences, Madras occurrences, and the Chauri Chaura occurrences.

'I am here, therefore, to invite and cheerfully submit to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the judge, is, as I am just going to say in my statement, either to resign your post or inflict on me the severest penalty, if you believe that the system and law you are assisting to administer are good for the people. I do not expect that kind of conversion, but by the time I have finished with my statement, you will perhaps have a glimpse of what is raging within my breast to run this maddest risk which a sane man can run.'

The Master understood the supremacy of the law — even alien law. His followers of course violate the law avoiding the consequences of punishment by the expedient of not being found out or by changing the law or by brazening it out when caught in the act.

If this be the landscape of legal morality, should we despair about the rule of law? 'Be you ever so high, the law is above you' is the mandate of our legal system. It is necessary in this context to notice an ambivalence in the public attitude to the rule of law and to judges. Indian public opinion has shown a deference to the decisions of judges as impartial outsiders not concerned about the status of the parties.

Although some may have doubts about the theory of equal laws for the rulers and the ruled, all have respect for judicial decisions, a res-

pect which induces the government to appoint judges to preside over inquiries regarding events of bewildering complexities which have nothing to do with the judicial process like train collisions, air-crashes and dam bursts. It is, therefore, necessary that those who wish to sustain the rule of law should identify tendencies in the society which work against it and strengthen forces against the social inequalities, dynastic tendencies and the pernicious doctrine that the rulers and the ruled are to be measured by different yardsticks.

If these factors appear depressing, one can do no better than to adapt the final words of the epilogue of a modern scholar of the Indian Constitution. Seervai writes: 'The narrative of facts given in this Epilogue presents a depressing picture of the working of our democratic Constitution. However, the people of our country are entitled to derive comfort from the knowledge that between June 1975 and the middle of March 1977, the picture looked grimmer still, and threatened to remain so indefinitely. The people of India — ordinary, humble people, defeated Mrs Gandhi's dictatorship by giving the Janata Party a resounding victory and restored the free working of our Constitution'.<sup>9</sup>

Lord Bryce, after a review of some of the depressing factors disclosed by the working of democracies concluded 'Hope, often disappointed but always renewed, is the anchor by which the ship that carries democracy and its fortunes will have to ride out this latest storm as it has ridden out many storms before. There is an Eastern story of a king with an uncertain temper who desired his astrologer to discover from the stars when his death would come. The astrologer, having cast the horoscope, replied that he could not find the date, but had ascertained only this that the king's death would follow immediately on his own. So may it be said that Democracy will never perish till after Hope has expired'.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> H M Seervai, *Constitutional Law of India*-Vol 3, 1979, p 1838

<sup>10</sup> Bryce, *Modern Democracies*, Vol II, p 670.



# Our vanishing ethics

NAYANTARA SAHGAL

OUR dominant culture is Hindu. It seems to me more and more evident that the strengths and weaknesses of our national life have to be sought in the kind of character Hinduism creates, and when we talk about ethics, it is the beliefs and thought processes which spring from that, that we must examine. Ethics are rules of conduct, and for most people they start from the moral question that asks: is this good or evil, right or wrong? The moral person is the one who sees the difference between right and wrong and makes a correct choice. Where the rules for living apply universally to all members of society, the moral choice is the same for everyone.

The Christian, for example, has his commandments. They do not vary from Christian to Christian and there is no mistaking what the basic Chris-

tian ethic means. It does not relate to ritual observance but to the kind of life a man is expected to live. Transcending the commandments and guiding the Christian conscience is the belief that God is good, and can be nothing else. When the Christian chooses what he recognises as the good, he knows he is ranged on the opposite side from evil. The two are forever irreconcilable, and no subtlety of argument can bridge this basic divide or blur the fundamental difference between them. Christianity and Islam, perhaps because they rose from the desert regions where life was austere, had to call for corporate effort so that the community could survive. Democracy in the sense of brotherhood was essential to this purpose.

The fertile soil of the Ganges plain produced a more complex, many-



layered society with a religion to match. No universal rules of conduct govern Hindu society. What to do and what not to do during the lifetime in which the Hindu happens to be presently placed, depends on who and what he is, his age and station. The virtuous Brahmin has one set of rules to live by, the virtuous Sudra has another. Duty means duty in the station to which one is born, and it takes the place of conscience. This is a vacuum so obvious that where the religious ethic does not provide conscience, all moral men from Socrates to Mahatma Gandhi have had to invent it as the true source of moral judgement, and the only reliable guide to the worthwhile life.

In contrast, conscience has been the prime motivator of western society. It has been the starting point from where the need for change has been seen and acknowledged. And it is significant that only western Christian society has in the natural course of its development produced curbs on government and a tradition of enlightened, responsible citizenship. In India conscience has never been a motivating force, except where rebel religions, reacting against the Hindu pattern, have made room for it. Caste, sub-caste and status continue to divide us, inequality is bred into our bones, and moral choice is rendered meaningless for us by a metaphysic that sees good and evil as part of the same grand design.

And grand it is, breathtaking in its majesty, a matchless metaphysic that dwarfs any other conceived by the mind of man, inviting the human spirit to adventure not through a single lifetime, but through innumerable lifetimes. The product, some eight hundred years before Christ, of prodigious intellectual enquiry, of minds that were both scholarly and effervescent, the *Upamshads* were the work of people who had a genius and a passion for the abstract. They constructed the role of man in no less a setting than the whole cosmos, identifying the individual *atman* with the idea of an all-pervading divinity. Like salt dissolved in water, the story of the *Upamshad* goes, the divine is everywhere, inseparable from life and matter. Whatever exists, partakes of the divine. The struggle of the human

self through its lifetimes is to seek and realize union with the divine.

The effort is a strictly individual one, unsupported by the comfort of a church, or a single holy book to which all controversies can be referred, and the challenge is stupendous, but it has nothing at all to do with the society in which one lives. 'Am I my brother's keeper?' might well have been a Hindu cry, and not Cam's Society has, in fact, to be preserved, complete with its inequalities and hierarchies, while the inner self engages in its struggle for salvation. And the goal of that inward striving is negative, for it seeks release from life itself.

But what about life's beauty, its comforts and pleasures? Isn't it wonderful to be alive, to enjoy good food, to respond to great music and fine literature, to fall in love, to work for the betterment of others? All that has a place, for there are many and varied duties to be performed, but ultimately it is all illusory, a network to entrap man and divert him from his real goal, which is to seek union with the divine and never to be born again. We live in order to cease living.

Recognizable ethics, in the sense of daily conduct and the rules laid down for it, reach us later in our history through the epics. The *Ramayana* gives us the ideal king, the perfect wife, the relationship between the two, and a host of other family and social relationships, all illustrative of the stern moral duty each person must perform according to where he is placed in life. Rama who loves his virtuous wife, and has watched her virtue publicly redeemed through her ordeal by fire, discards her anyway. And he does it twice, the first time exiling her to the wilderness though she is pregnant and in need of care, and the second time many years later allowing her to disappear heartbroken into the earth, without saying a word in her defence when she is once again unjustly accused.

Rama's moral duty refers to his kingship, not to his conscience as a human creature, or his personal equation with a woman he knows to be blameless, courageous and good.

Forced to choose, it is the human equation, and the voice of his conscience, that he throws aside. The power equation — based on idle gossip and a lie — overrides these. The shocking immorality of this decision unnerved me and made a feminist of me in my teens. Yet I do not know of any Hindu objection raised against this appalling miscarriage of decency and justice. On the contrary, Rama and Sita remain models, he for his technically correct, rather than humane and just behaviour, she for her needless martyrdom. I remember asking the teacher with whom I read the *Ramayana* how such behaviour could ever be condoned, let alone held up as a model for other people. But to questions such as these the *Ramayana* has no answer. An exquisite and poetic tale does not after all expect to end up as scripture.

The *Bhagvad Gita* carries the Hindu ethic to its most practical interpretation when it tells us that action is what life is all about. It is our duty to act — with all that the word means in terms of positive and noble living, service of the community, and battle for a righteous cause — yet it also tells us we must remain unaffected by the triumph or failure, in other words, the human reaction to the results that our actions bring. The wise man is indifferent. Love, hate, victory, defeat, pleasure and pain are all the same to him, and leave him unmoved. An impressive philosophy, but chill sustenance to a person suffering here-and-now, and something of a brake upon all wholehearted endeavour. Joy, pain, achievement, must be granted a full-scale legitimacy in the here-and-now if human beings are to live, hope and work with a will.

But what have the 3,000-year-old *Upamshads* or even the 400 years since Tulsidas made the *Ramayana* the bible of the masses, have to do with Indian behaviour today? They remain almost contemporary, because nothing has yet challenged the heart of the argument that the world is a garment to be cast off, and reality lies in shedding it. The Bhakti movement with its loving personal God, its rejection of caste and creed and ceremony, set aside much that was meaningless or cruel, or too complex.



for the common man, but the object of living was still to escape life

The later Hindu reformers, influenced by Christianity and western ideas of revolution and industrialization, crusaded to change their environment and tried to persuade others to do the same, but they were acting upon a society that lacked the conviction for the task. Reform blazed a fierce but narrow trail through an encroaching forest of custom, convention and ancient indifference. Laws alone could not accomplish social change, especially where the educated public lacked conscience, and the sense of social responsibility it arouses

In our own time Tilak and Gandhi re-interpreted the *Bhagavad Gita* as a gospel of social action whose stirring message — Arise and Act! — was able to galvanize the people to fight for freedom, and act for the good of society in many other ways. But the gospel broke down where it touched the labyrinthine jungle of the social set-up. The untouchable remained untouchable. Dowry remained dowry. No torch passed from hand to hand. The message did not take root and flower. It died with the passing of the leader, the reformer, the prophet who had embodied it. The profound ethics by which Gandhi lived and conducted the national movement were confined even in his time to the ethical few, and are visible now only in the voluntary service organizations established in his memory. In politics he left only a handful of heirs to his moral approach. Significantly, his own chosen political heir was not a product of Hindu teaching, but a man brought up in a westernized home and educated and trained for a career in England. The other great figure in politics — Jayaprakash Narayan — was also a product largely of western education and experience — for even Marx's vision had its origin in Christian compassion and the promise that the meek and oppressed shall inherit the earth.

It is time to ask ourselves whether the awe-inspiring integrity of these two Indians was an aberration on our national scene, rather than the result of the soil that bore them. It may also be that we have nothing to fear, spiritually, from authentic western values, and those who have drunk

deep at them — while we have much to fear from a large part of our educated elite which possesses a superficial veneer of the West, but no real understanding of either its own or western tradition. Our ruling class, whether in politics, business, or the professions, belongs generally to this group. For eleven years it had the example of a leader who carried all the trappings of westernization without any of its reality, and whose Indian inheritance was as superficial.

The decay of political morality, and the contamination of the whole national environment thereby, did not begin with Mrs. Gandhi, nor was it confined to her, but for the first time the signal for it came from the top. Her clutch at political survival, which the Emergency in essence was, finally illuminated the leadership levels of our society in a striking way, when members of the intellectual-artistic-administrative-commercial establishment conspicuously failed to provide a moral lead. They stepped out instead to flatter and obey. It was the common man who reacted instinctively against the humiliation of enforced sterilization, and demonstrated that there are boundaries of self-esteem which shall not be violated. He did not demonstrate on a matter of conscience, because conscience is not in his tradition. No issue of conscience has ever been fought for until recently, and then only by a dedicated minority of the elite, in India. Heroes like Shivaji and Maharana Pratap Singh fought to save their land from the intruder. Their opposition was primarily to an occupying power, not to intellectual or moral belief. No Hindu has said, as the European has said over and over again in his history: "This is a crossroads. One way is right, the other wrong, and I must choose between them."

Is economic progress alone going to set things right? People who are better off, and can read and write, might be less tempted into corrupt behaviour and less likely to be victimized by the corrupt. 'Life', Jawaharlal Nehru wrote, 'is something more than economic growth, though it is well to realize that economic growth is a basic foundation to life and progress.' What is needed is a resolution of the essential con-

flict in our midst. We pursue an exalted ethic at the level of the search for individual salvation, while we compromise with all possible barbarity in daily life. Unless religion itself closes this schism and lays down a direct relation between man's salvation and the world he lives in, ethics will have no meaning, and it is only too evident they do not. For what seems now to have reached the furthest limits of indecency in politics as well as other spheres of life may be a case not of vanishing ethics, but of the a-morality of Hinduism, which keeps an equidistance from good and evil.

Caught between abstractions on the one hand and ritual on the other, the Hindu has nothing he can call a living faith, certainly no sounding board for moral behaviour. Instead, he has obedience. From childhood he is taught to obey — his parents, his teacher, his elder, his ruler, his boss. And in this vast framework of obedience any hypocrisy, any lie can and does flourish, for lifelong obedience is certainly not the climate of man's growth, nor can it produce anything but corruption behind the scenes. Character is connected internally with conscience and outwardly with responsibility. Until these two are acknowledged and joined, there is no escape from the rampant immorality that no longer takes the trouble to disguise itself.

Unfashionably perhaps, I believe that essential civilization is based on a society's religious beliefs, and that no worthwhile human growth takes place without the religious yearning, call it by what name you will. The strengths and weaknesses of our own culture have never looked so startling, for what we are watching now is the Indianization of India. The civil service is now entirely Indian educated and trained. The politicians, except for the top layer, belong to a generation that has come to maturity after independence. Even the top layer is largely of Indian background and inspiration, and one of these, Charan Singh, represents a wholly new lobby in Indian politics, which is the result of shifting power relationships in the country. The growth of agrarian power, and the changes and tensions this will throw up will, above all,



compel us to face important facts about ourselves. And assuming we are to keep the democratic system, we will have to respond to new needs at many levels in a clear-cut way that may mean considerable departures from the past

In my view the government will have to give much more scope to the citizen. Its own hugely expanded responsibilities cannot but make procedures laborious, and its enormous powers of patronage have made corruption the rule rather than the exception. One of our basic ills is that we cannot even, in this vast machine, locate the responsibility for non-performance, insensitivity or error. In a democracy the size of ours, it becomes necessary to decentralize for purely functional and practical reasons, and ultimately responsibility must vest in citizens themselves, not in government organs, however decentralized.

The exaggerated suspicion of the individual that our populist politicians display strikes a ridiculous note in any system that calls itself democratic, and in any government that renders itself accountable at the bar of public opinion through parliament and elections. With strict limits on wealth and power there is no reason why a remarkably talented people should not be allowed to come into their own. And obviously the scope for corrupt practice narrows as soon as accountability can be pinpointed.

Yet, eventually, the functioning of a society depends upon the deeper values that motivate it. Emotionally and psychologically, we have tended to avoid the whole question of values. We have steered clear of the collision course, the stark choice. It may now be time to define our values, to do without the luxury of detachment. Somewhere we must realize we cannot eat our cake and have it. All contradiction cannot forever be contained. We have to choose, and perhaps only then come to maturity as a nation. But the kind of maturity we achieve will rest on how the dominant Hindu culture we are heir to will look at the issue of good and evil, for all workable ethics flow from a clear and categorical distinction between the two.

## On heroism in our time

NIRMAL VERMA

LONG ago, a Marxist critic, Christopher Caudwell, in his seminal *Studies in a Dying Culture* had seen T.E. Lawrence as perhaps the last hero of the West. The European civilisation, he felt, was poised on the brink of collapse and all romantic possibilities of a role for the hero were utterly exhausted. For the western society today, this comment of Caudwell's contains a poignant truth.

The only choice available to the rebel who refuses to accept the stifling confines of bourgeois civilisation is to forsake his own society,



and go to the backward, underdeveloped countries where the doors to change are open or many yet waiting to be opened. The quest for 'heroic action' led the French writer, Régis Debray, to years of restless wandering with guerilla rebels in the wilds of Bolivia. It also happens that society chooses to forsake, ostracise and eventually push out such rebel thinkers. That is what happened to Solzhenitsyn.

But, in either case — both examples convey the same awful truth — the individual in western society (capitalist or its socialist variant) finds himself powerless to fulfill his yearning for 'heroic revolutionary action'. He could be anything — a rebel thinker, a dissident intellectual, a seditionist, a bomb throwing terrorist, a hijacker — but he could never be a 'heroic leader' in whose life and struggle the humblest may find a promise of liberation and the touchstone of his own conscience.

It is precisely in this context that the 'heroic role' of Jayaprakash Narayan assumes crucial significance. And if he appears so very different from the 19th century 'romantic hero', or the 'phony heroes', the tyrants and dictators of our own times, it is because in his political life he had sought to transform in a fundamental way the definition of the 'hero'. This could have been possible if the power of the State and the freedom of the individual could be so balanced that political action and moral responsibility would cease to be antagonistic and become instead mutually complementary. In the West this moral dimension of the 'hero' has almost been lost. The Russian revolution has confirmed the belief that every revolution is destined to devour its own heroes, and, those who, like Stalin, survive only to soil the ideals of the revolution itself.

In our own country too, the hero has almost always been regarded with suspicion and distrust. The people of our country chose to acknowledge Gandhi not as a hero, but as a Mahatma. True, Nehru did seem often a bit like a 'hero'. But in reality he was a good liberal full of democratic ideals, to use that char-

acteristically English expression, Nehru was a Statesman. Lohia, so uniquely gifted — an intellectual activist who thought far ahead of his times — could only be the soldier of a poor country forever in battle. Living right in the midst of Indian tradition, Lohia in politics was always an outsider, like Don Quixote, somewhat ridiculous — not so much a hero as an 'anti-hero'.

In India's unique situation, the Mahatma, the Statesman, the rebel thinker still leave perhaps an unfilled space for that complex role encompassing all these, lived in our times by Jayaprakashji. J.P. was a 'hero', but clearly not in the classic sense as defined by Caudwell in the context of the West. Away from the neat and sterile categories of modern politics he struggled to discharge a unique and multiple role of an intellectual, a sage, a socialist revolutionary and a Gandhian. Satyagrahi. He had sought to dismantle the pragmatic, one-dimensional structure of Indian politics created in blind imitation of the West.

J.P.'s entire life affirms a unique truth, no one, given the staggering problems of our twisted colonial inheritance could be meaningful, if he were merely to be an intellectual, a politician or a saint. Within these confines even one's own truth would be elusive. And herein lies, it seems to me, the real meaning of his apparently strange 'heroic role'. But it could hardly be strange to the Indian people who so affectionately owned him in his last years as their own hero — Lok Nayak.

For few, perhaps, has love flowed from the Indian people in such abundance as for Jayaprakashji. When I search for a reason the only explanation I can find is his infinite compassion. Treading the blood soaked paths of the 20th century one comes face to face with an individual who stirred into life the hidden compassion of even the humblest in this impoverished, cruel society. More than Gandhi it was, perhaps, Jayaprakash who revealed to us the possibility of creating a space for compassion in the otherwise barren and power-obsessed Indian politics. It was not an easy task and Jaya-

prakashji was no iron man. And if the political leaders in the West and in India seem so puny in J.P.'s presence, it is because he rescued compassion from the realm of poetry and religion and dared to make it the very touchstone of politics.

Rather than bend himself to the dictates of a manipulative politics he sought to make politics responsive to human compassion. His 'heroism' lies not in his triumphs but in his frustrating defeats. In the violent and power-crazed politics of the 20th century, any hero by himself is condemned to defeat. It is not as if heroes never triumph but it is the sad irony of our times, that they triumph only as 'commissars'.

However, not all defeats in history are noble. They may often cause untold grief and suffering. Gandhi's sudden removal from the Indian scene left a terrible void. Only Jayaprakashji could have created a sense of meaningful direction in that situation. He alone could have wrested from the Socialist's rout in the first elections of free India, an occasion for critical self-reflection in quest of a new alternative. This could have been the historic moment, when in the midst of the vague idealism of westernised liberals and the stifling rigidities of the Marxists, he could have explored the path indicated years ago by Gandhi. That could have become a truly revolutionary source of inspiration for the struggling peoples of Asia and Africa.

In that Jayaprakashji failed. So many reasons could be found for his failure. But it seems to me what made him fail was his sense of deep uncertainty and doubt — these were, I think, the truly human qualities of J.P. as also his most tragic aspect. When I look back on J.P.'s life and its predicaments, I am reminded of Kafka's note in his diary, 'There is the goal but there is no way. What we regard as the way is nothing but hesitation'.

This hesitation and uncertainty were not born of weakness or cowardice. On the contrary they arose from a lucid awareness of the cruel paradoxes of our times. Only the one who understands may dare to



doubt And such a person suffers and suffers endlessly It is a suffering that we barely comprehend Jayaprakash's sense of doubt had to do with the nature of State power In the early years of his political life — inspired by the example of the Russian revolution — he had believed that State power could be forged in to an instrument of liberty and happiness for the people In later life — in a state of disillusionment — he had felt that power in itself was evil So long as men do not change themselves a mere change of State power would lead nowhere

**T**his he took from Gandhi But Gandhi in articulating that abiding tension between politics and morality had suggested the path towards an all embracing cultural transformation But J P in despair and disillusionment wandered off towards the Sarvodaya and Bhoodan of Vinoba These were the wasted years of his precious life when turning away from the ever present tension between power and freedom, political action and individual morality, he sought truth in abstract human values But there was no truth to be found There was only Vinoba who had reduced Gandhi's creative experiments with truth to inane platitudes — a parody of Gandhi

In politics, the belief in 'eternal values' has no meaning unless it is translated into an urgent response to the actual forms of injustice and tyranny in contemporary society To do that one cannot flee from State power, one has to face it Just as for an artist the challenge is to give words, content and form to a barely perceptible beauty, for a creative political activist the supreme challenge is to shape and illumine the elusive values of human freedom in the filthy, dusty and frightening realm of politics

Herein also lies the basic difference between a Tolstoi, a Gandhi and a Lenin Tolstoi, could never integrate his life with his ideals There was Lenin for whom action itself became an ideal, revolution an end in itself, and upon its altar he was even prepared to sacrifice the ideals of the revolution itself Gandhi was the only politician — if

one could call him a politician — who never lost sight of ideals in the midst of action, nor could he forget the need for action in the dreamy mist of ideals This was no simplistic equation of convenience between action and ideals, but a unique and comprehensive definition of 'political *dharma*' in the midst of the lawless and amoral politics of the 20th century

**A**fter a tortuous and bewildering journey, Jayaprakash towards the end of his life knocked at the threshold of this truth And once he arrived there, all his doubts and despair dissolved like the morning mist It was his courage and our good fortune that from this threshold he gave the call of 'Total Revolution' He was perhaps amongst the first to see the growing evil of corruption and immorality in our political life It is not as if before that our political life had been free of evil But Indira Gandhi in her life came to embody its ultimate definition Only 'Total Revolution' could challenge 'Total Evil' J P's 'heroic role' — which seems to emerge only as disparate fragments in the various phases of his life — acquires completeness in the massive upsurge of Total Revolution

J P's Indian quest has significance beyond the confines of India Somewhere it symbolised the outraged faith and revolt of the bewildered, intimidated and helpless individual of the 20th century In his endeavour to transcend the deceptions and the iron laws of history he made each of us aware of the innermost laws of our own being This moral dimension elevated 'Total Revolution' far above all the power-crazed revolutions of the 20th century J P in his last days was like a poet-revolutionary who had at long last found a form, a content and a living voice for that restless dream which had never ceased to stir within him

Would we ever be able to realise that dream in its purity with all its ardour and compassion? That is the question he leaves behind for all of us Indians to answer

*Translated from the Hindi by  
Suresh Sharma*



# Document

This 'agenda' was originally prepared by a group composed of *Romesh Thapar, Rajni Kothari, Bashiruddin Ahmed, George Verghese, Kuldip Nayar and Mrinal Datta-Chaudhuri*. It was then circulated to some 100 persons all over the sub-continent. Amendments and adjustments, in keeping with the need to achieve a consensus, were made. The draft, designed for serious discussion and debate, now has the broad support of . Nissim Ezekiel, M.L. Dantwala, Suresh Joshi, Justice V.A. Naik, J.P.S. Uberoi, Santi P. Chowdhury, Kirit Parikh, Imtiaz Ahmed, A.B. Yajnik, Rajmohan Gandhi, K. Sesadari, Air Marshal P.C. Lal, Vijai Pillai, Pradip Bose, Vijay Tendulkar, Satish Saberwal, Aloo Dastur, M. Bhaktavatsala, Mahendra N. Karna, V.M. Tarkunde, Nand Kishore Acharya, Govind Talwalker, M.B. Pavaskar, S.H. Vatsayan, Romila Thapar, V.V. John, K.D. Desai, Ashok H. Desai, M.N. Srinivas, S. Nihal Singh, L.C. Jain, Samar Sen, Nayantara Sahgal, Kumar Prashant, Shibanand Tewari, Anupam Mishra, Lotika Sarkar, D.N. Dhanagare, Sunil Sahasrabudhey, H.K. Paranjape, Raj Thapar, B.S. Minhas, Ravi J. Matthai, Ramashray Ray, Ashis Nandy, D.L. Sheth, A.B. Shah, Giri Deshingkar, Ramchandra Gandhi, Raj Krishna.

## AN AGENDA FOR INDIA

### PERSPECTIVE

THE crisis of Indian politics today is a crisis of change. It reflects the widening gap between the base of the polity and its structures. During the last decade both political and economic processes have brought sections of the peripheral and deprived social strata into the active political community. Particularly in the north, the intermediate peasant castes have bettered their economic conditions with the help of new agricultural technology, they are no longer willing to accept a political dispensation weighted in favour of the traditionally privileged. This is a process which started in the south earlier. The Harijans, too, now

are aware of their rights, thanks to the slowly changing opportunity structure and the efforts by political parties to mobilize their support. They have begun demanding a change for the better in their lot. Finally, there is the massive change in the social and political sensibilities in the rest of the active political community. There is a growing demand for purposive and principled politics, a deep feeling of revulsion against the politics of self-aggrandisement and a mounting anger over the neglect of public interest by political parties and leaders.

Electoral outcomes since 1967 provide ample evidence of these changes at the grass roots of our



polity Yet, our leaders continue to indulge in the same old game of gaining ascendancy through the politics of manipulation Those among them who engage in defections and 'toppling' are also the ones who go in for ideological posturing and populist rhetoric They have little respect for public interest or popular sentiment except to exploit it for ensuring their own political survival They outbid each other in making promises to the people even if doing so distorts the political process, confuses the public and undermines its confidence in the democratic system

All this is best illustrated by

\*The promise of 'stability' and 'order', and by implication, of strong, centralized and authoritarian rule, when the urgent need of the moment is change — indeed, fundamental change — and when the one important way the system can deliver the goods is through decentralization and further democratization, not centralization and authoritarianism

\*The exploitation of concepts like secularism and communalism, historically the most delicate and potentially explosive issues in our polity, by reducing them to catchy slogans for getting leverage in the struggle for office when in fact the need is to contain religious and communal divisions and direct national debate into channels more appropriate for bringing about socio-economic changes which benefit all groups

\*The discrediting of the judicial process by making criminal and political offences, established through perfectly legal procedures and backed by incontestable evidence, a subject of political horse-trading when the need is to re-establish the sanctity of legal institutions and constitutional process and to lend efficiency and despatch to the judicial process and bring it within the reach of the ordinary people

\*The wooing by political parties of influential segments by holding out promises which they all know can harm the economy and the interest of the people at large This is illustrated by promises about bonus to industrial workers and government servants, or about location of costly projects on regional and parochial rather than sound technical and economic considerations, when the real need is to both contain unreasonable demands of the organized sector and provide employment and increased earnings for the poor and the dispossessed most of whom belong to the unorganized and the non-unionized sectors

### Serious Challenge

It is, in part, because of such spurious issues and unprincipled actions that the credibility of the system

is at a low ebb and the democratic political process is facing a serious challenge today This challenge comes primarily from an anti-people and authoritarian political party which thinks of elections, not as an expression of the will of the people, but as an occasion for manipulating public discontent and turning it into a plebiscite for personal power Elsewhere, where such plebiscitary dictatorships have come to power, they have done so in the name of the people, in the name of stability and discipline, progress and 'modernization' and, above all, in the name of national unity and glory That almost all such dictatorships fail to deliver the goods and ultimately spell ruin for the country, has not stopped the same process from repeating itself And wherever this happens, it is largely because the prevailing political system has got into a rut and has ceased to perform and to elicit support from the people

If India is to avoid this scenario — now or later — its people should get to the root of the problem All these years we have been only too prone to complacency Some of us have tended to live under one illusion or another — illusion about a more cohesive Congress Party after 1969, illusion about the Emergency, illusion about the Janata Party It should now be clear that unless our democratic polity can meet the challenges of change effectively its very survival will be imperilled The greatest need of the moment is to restructure our institutions — social, economic and political — and give a new thrust and purpose to politics in the country There are no instant solutions to problems arising out of basic social change and no effective ways of resolving them satisfactorily except through an open and competitive political process Failure to recognise this will be grave folly, for, in a society experiencing change, regimes which are not democratic freeze the situation rather than transform it for the better The task to which we should address ourselves, therefore, is the task of strengthening the democratic system by (a) bridging the gap between the centres of decision-making and the people, (b) enabling the underprivileged and the deprived to become part of the power structure at present controlled by the dominant castes and the urban middle classes, (c) reorienting the economic system to meet the real needs of the latter and of the population as a whole, and with this in view, (d) drawing upon new technologies, innovative efforts in organization, management and research, and the enormous pool of skilled personnel and entrepreneurial talent that exists, to give a major push to the economy

### A CALL FOR STRUCTURAL CHANGE

This calls for not just new policies designed to meet the real needs of all but a restructuring of the framework of power and decision-making It also calls for endowing local populations with the necessary wherewithal to exercise control over their own destinies This entails a new process of power-sharing — both economic and political — which is radically different from the present highly centralized process



dominated by a small political, bureaucratic and professional elite. It involves creating a framework that strengthens the self-reliant capacities of the people, now threatened by monstrosly monolithic, inefficient and corrupt organizations. We have by now enough experience to show that it is very difficult, almost impossible, to remove poverty and gross disparities in a society like ours — which is based on the twin principles of inequality and immobility — except by endowing the poor and the deprived with the power to make decisions that affect them, aided by men who are competent and dedicated within the administrative hierarchies and governing structures.

### Decentralization

It follows that the decentralization of decision-making and a widely shared access to techno-economic resources are not objectives to be achieved at some distant date. In our situation they are urgent necessities without which planned development can only lead to 'maldevelopment' — consumerism and wasteful life-style for one section of the people and denial of basic necessities for another — to too much of power in the sprawling ministries and too little of it in the districts and the tehsils and the towns where the critical work is to be carried out and where the bulk of the poor people live. The rationale behind the notion of 'organizing the poor' is irrefutable, but it must be clear that the poor cannot be organized by planners and operators from above, no matter how enlightened they are, nor by well-intentioned people of goodwill from outside trying to set up people's committees, although they can certainly become catalysts of change. For change to actually take place it is necessary to endow States with more resources and to ensure that these resources (including the precise heads of taxation and activities designed to generate surpluses) are distributed to lower levels on the basis of some scheme that takes account of existing disparities. Even more crucial in this regard is the linking of such distribution to the actual exercise of power handed down all along the line, from the centre to the State and from the State to the district and so on.

In order that this takes place, it is necessary to first evolve an appropriate political framework that will take us beyond the constraints of the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy. This will entail,

- \* A reorganization of the States and districts on the basis of rational size, social homogeneity, communication facility and administrative efficiency
- \* A restructuring of the federal set-up by making the districts a third tier of decision-making with direct elections and responsible government, though without reproducing the sprawling ministries and bureaucracies at the central and State levels (Indeed, the new model of federalism should considerably reduce the size of secretariats at higher levels as well)

- \* A devolution of functions and responsibilities, with commensurate resources and skilled personnel, to State and district levels, leaving the ministries at the centre free from routine administration and with more time for sustained monitoring and evaluating
- \* An autonomous structure of representative government for the national capital region and the existing and emerging metropolitan areas, with direct access to national resources for dealing with conditions of squalor and disease and fast deteriorating services
- \* Appointment of statutory Finance Committees in all States to decide upon allocation of resources to individual districts and local bodies in the light of their revenue potentials and needs, following the award of the Finance Commission
- \* A change in the style of functioning of the Planning Commission to make it a truly national and federal body for multi-level planning, instead of being an arm of the central government, with the necessary commitment to function in partnership with planning and evaluation bodies at State and district levels

### Economic Restructuring

Needless to say, decentralization of power to the lower tiers of the polity will not by itself provide requisite *economic* power to the people, though we do believe that decentralization of political power is a prerequisite for achieving a more just social and economic order. Even if in the short run it increases the power of the dominant castes, by the sheer logic of electoral politics at the local levels, it is bound to generate a process that will before long undermine that dominance.

However, simultaneously with such a process, it is necessary to initiate restructuring of economic and social relations and, indeed, to make such restructuring the agenda of democratic politics in the various regions. For, to no small extent, the reasons underlying the existing concentration of power at higher levels — as well as the reasons that have so far prevented the decentralization of administrative and political power and legislative reforms affecting land and property relations from being implemented — are to be found in the prevailing socio-economic structure. It is a structure which makes for dependencies based on property relations, and the considerable economic controls that emanate from an all-encompassing State apparatus converge into a powerful intermesh of interests. In short, the devolution of political power will have little meaning if the existing structure of economic power and privilege is left intact.

It is necessary, of course, to recognize that organized social action on a massive scale through the State machinery was considered, after Independence,



necessary for breaking the vicious circle of poverty and stagnation. This belief was indeed the rationale for development planning then, as it is now. Although our achievements during the last three decades fell far short of our expectations, the country has created an impressive industrial base and infused considerable dynamism in some parts of its agriculture. While a lot still remains to be done in both these sectors, the economy has unquestionably moved a long way towards the possibility of self-sustained growth. Today the State plays an enormous role in regulating the economy. In the supply of coal, steel, cement, fertilizers, electricity, petroleum products, transport services and a variety of capital goods the public sector is in a 'dominant' position. The nationalization of financial institutions endows the State with considerable power in the distribution of credit and developmental finance. This and the regulatory policies of the State, such as determining the prices of foodgrains and other basic goods and services, can be used to direct the pattern of economic development and economic well-being. The social democratic ideal of placing the State at the commanding heights of the economy having already been realized to a great extent in India, it should now be possible to redirect the economy and combine the objectives of both economic growth and distributive justice through emphasis on employment creation and regional development.

State power in a democratic system comes out of a process of competitive politics. Consequently, if it is identified too closely with any narrow interest group, it is bound to generate alienation and hostility in other groups. There is considerable danger that this will happen as we enter a period of political fluidity at the centre marked by sudden shifts in the fortunes of political factions and parties. Those holding power in such a period will seek to sustain themselves in office by pursuing policies based entirely on short-term political calculations even if doing so results in damage to the economy as a whole.

To promote continued economic development and to ensure that the current state of our fragmented polity does not injure our social democratic framework beyond repair, it is necessary to evolve a consensus, irrespective of party and other lines, on the rules of the game in regard to (a) modalities by which the economic interests of different groups and regions are to be promoted and (b) the means through which conflicts among them are to be resolved. In the absence of clear and decisive political alignments on ideological lines or a dominant ideological commitment in the body politic, the emergence of some rules of the game to promote diverse interests and to resolve conflicts of interests on non-partisan lines is a *sine qua non* of purposeful government. Issues relating to decentralization of economic decision-making structures, planning at different levels, the role of the public sector, the degree of market regulation and control, pricing, wage and incentive policies, etc., are subservient to the emergence of this consensus.

Although it would be wrong to view the problems of economic development in the 1980s as essentially those of determining investment allocations among competing sectors, the renewed emphasis on rural development and raising the share of investment in agriculture today derives not only from the obvious point that food is the most basic need but also from the fact that the accrual of income from agriculture is fairly wide-spread and so is work participation. The bulk of the poor live in the rural areas and are only loosely integrated with the non-agricultural sectors of the economy. The major thrust of the poverty eradication strategy, and of the specific programmes for particular poverty groups, will have to be in the rural areas.

The focal point for strategic thinking and action on development issues would have to be the improvement of the capacities of the poorest to earn and attain socially acceptable levels of living through the expansion of employment opportunities. The earning capacities of producers with poor resource bases will have to be augmented through resource transfers and through the rigorous implementation of the land ceilings and tenancy reform legislation which has already been passed. New initiatives in the field of land reform are difficult to imagine as a practical proposition in the current state of our polity.

Even with expanded employment opportunities, the poor will not be able, with their levels of earnings, to buy their basic needs of health care, sanitation, clean drinking water, education and shelter. The collective provision of these basic needs can go a long way in the establishment of conditions which help the poor to increase their ability to help themselves and grow in economic strength.

The remarks made in the three preceding paragraphs hold good only if the apparently emerging political consensus for the execution of development policy in favour of the poor gets strengthened. The progress in this direction will last so long as the ruling apparatus feels compelled to go back to the people for seeking their mandate to rule, or feels otherwise threatened by the poor. The objective circumstances, nevertheless, do not seem to be entirely free from the risk of slipping into an elitist oligarchy.

Much would depend on how the current populist, anti-poverty rhetoric is politically managed. The populist commitment towards the execution of development policy in favour of the poor needs to be translated not only into changed flows of resources, but primarily into a reorganised structure of the responsible agencies of the government at different levels, proper means of horizontal and vertical coordination among them, and in forging effective instruments for the participation of the potential beneficiaries in the planning and implementation of the efforts on their behalf.

The Indian economy has become a great deal more complex and interdependent than it was in the fifties.



Problems of managing the system are consequently more important today than ever before. Apart from the usual problems relating to the continuity of efforts in the sphere of large investment projects or coordination of policies affecting the different sectors, two problem areas have emerged which will have serious impact on the future of our industrialisation and economic development: one is the working of the public sector and the other, the conditions governing our industrial relations.

*Public Sector* In the Indian model of development the public sector occupies an important place as a supplier of intermediate goods and key services to the production economy as well as the manager of our financial institutions. It is urgently necessary to take special steps to ensure efficiency of public sector undertakings by insulating them from political interference and running them strictly on economic considerations, with a measure of competition built into their functioning, the aim always being the generating of surpluses needed for promoting growth and equity.

*Industrial Relations* In any economic system certain groups occupy critical positions which permit them to use their coercive powers to cause considerable damage to the entire economy. Recent strikes and disturbances in the water works of Delhi, in the collieries of Bihar, the railways, the Indian Oil Corporation and the electricity undertakings of West Bengal and of several other States well illustrate the social and economic disruption such action can produce. While the strike is a legitimate instrument of collective bargaining, it is necessary to curb unbridled factionalism in trade unions and make them work within a set of recognizable norms of inter-union competition and collective bargaining. The nexus between vested interests and the state machinery, which is bedeviling industrial relations, should be broken and party-political considerations be prevented from intruding into the field of industrial relations. Reform of the existing structure of trade unions and industrial relations brooks no delay.

It is essential not to confuse an egalitarian approach to the labouring classes with a condescending attitude that leads to pampering — and that, too, of the not-so-labouring classes. There is, for instance, no excuse whatever for the highly paid employees to hold the community to ransom or place an intolerable burden on the economy. Nor is there any justification for workers in the organized sector demanding bonuses without productivity gains attributable to their endeavours. It needs to be remembered that in a situation of poverty and underemployment the basic conflict is between the organized and the unorganized sector and that every concession to pressure from the labour aristocracy entails further denial of opportunities to the vast majority of the labouring masses.

Beyond these problem areas, there are larger issues of economic discipline and social ethic that call for understanding and commitment across party lines.

It is not possible to insist on restraint among the working classes if the pace-setters of society — the professionals, the managers, the politicians — indulge in over-consumption and a wasteful style of life. It gives rise to a system of production and distribution, incentives and disincentives, that distorts economic priorities and undermines social cohesion. As we enter the nineteen-eighties, India presents the picture of a 650 million strong continental society, endowed with an enormous pool of scientific and technological talent and promising a major breakthrough as an industrial power, but overlaid with vast differences in access to opportunity and resources between social strata. This may give rise to tension and conflict at so many levels that the very size and potential of the country turns it into a vast arena of frustration, violence and entropy. Much will therefore depend on whether we are able to transfer our productive capabilities into distributive justice and a fair deal for all. This, in turn, will entail an ethic of consumption, life-style and social equity, and a corresponding design for maxima and minima for all.

## POPULATION POLICY

The family planning programme is in a shambles, it has not yet recovered from the damage done to it during the Emergency. Surprisingly enough, in spite of an all-round consensus on the need to bring down the birth rate from the present 34 per thousand to 21 per thousand by the year 2001, there is no effective family planning programme nor a coherent population policy. We are today 630 million and will be around 950 million by the turn of the century. Our policies and institutional structures should take account of this factor.

So far, the approach to the problem of a rapidly growing population has been based on the conviction, widely shared by the elites, that the reproductive habits of the poor are to blame for it. Attempts at forced sterilisation during the Emergency carried the logic of this conviction to its ultimate absurdity. The poor do indeed have larger families, in the environment in which they live this is not irrational. Incidence of high infant mortality, the need for some guarantee of sustenance in old age and the desperate necessity to improve the probability of some members of the family getting gainful employment create the economic conditions in which a large family becomes a desirable norm for the poor. Ignorance of the reproduction process is the least important reason.

The need is for a comprehensive population policy, not just a family planning programme. Such a policy must combine specific measures for limiting births with a wide spectrum of social welfare measures. It should focus on the minimum needs, especially of the poor, in terms of employment, housing and education, provide for preventive and curative medical care and for the welfare of the aged. Along with this, it should include an imaginative scheme of incentives and disincentives tied to inputs and services provided by governmental agencies and to income and ex-



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penditure flows of families and individuals. In short, the population policy, as Kerala's experience shows, must form a part of the general strategy of development.

The specific birth-control methods in existence must, of course, be popularized on an ever widening scale. No scheme of incentives and disincentives will be effective unless there is a parallel motivational effort on a massive scale. The research effort to find simple and reliable methods for preventing conception must also be stepped up.

## EDUCATION

Reform of the educational system is absolutely vital if we are to strike at the roots of inequality and privilege and restore to the educational process some social value and purpose. Ill-conceived policies and ad hoc actions over the years have created a system with an overdeveloped super-structure of colleges and universities resting on a small and weak base of mostly ill-equipped and badly run primary, middle and secondary schools, with a very thin stratum of intermediate institutions designed to impart job-oriented instruction and training. This configuration must be drastically changed by expanding forthwith the school system to meet the need for education and skill formation, particularly in the rural areas.

It will, however, be wrong to cast the issue of educational reform in either/or terms between primary and higher education. It is necessary to strengthen the educational system at all levels, for not only has universal education failed to materialize, but our colleges and universities have also failed to become institutions of higher learning. Created and sustained in response to short-term political considerations, most of the latter are deeply affected by factional pulls and pressures which have turned them into centres of patronage rather than of learning, with personal, caste and political loyalties counting more than scholarship in faculty appointments and promotions. The need is to free them from politicking so as to enable them to become institutions of higher education and learning in the true sense of the term.

Pursuing this goal need not militate against pursuing the goal of universal education, if a discriminating approach to education is adopted. We must begin first by delinking jobs from degrees, though not from a test of merit relevant to specific positions, so that a majority of students are siphoned-off at the end of the high school and only those with the necessary aptitude and promise proceed towards higher education. The other students should be provided the option of acquiring professional and technical skills through short-range courses conducted by a large network of functionally oriented polytechnics.

Such a system, however, runs the risk of working in favour of the well-to-do sections of our society perpetrating age-old inequalities. It is, therefore, essential to eliminate the sources of educational pri-

vilage by forcing public schools as well as private day schools with large tuition fees out of existence through a substantially improved system of neighbourhood schools run by government and by voluntary agencies. The aim should be to make the latter, in five to ten years, the only institutions in the school system so that both parentage and 'connections' are no longer a factor in educational advantage for the privileged few compared to the unprivileged many. Steps, however, will be needed to develop some of the schools in the system as institutions of excellence to cater to the needs of bright and gifted children and as pace-setters in the field of school education. Since instruction through English has been another source of perpetuating status and privilege, education must be imparted at all levels of the new school system in the mother tongue. English, however, should be made part of the school curriculum, preferably at all levels. This is essential since English is at the moment the only link-language in the country and our primary channel to knowledge and experience in the rest of the world. Other steps would include (a) pricing of higher education in relation to the real costs so that the present practice of subsidizing the children of the well-to-do is ended, and (b) ensuring access to higher education for the economically handicapped meritorious students through a scheme of financial grants and scholarships. It will be equally necessary to enable those who initially opted for job-oriented or short professional courses to improve their educational status. This can be done either by allowing them lateral entry into colleges and universities or by developing formal and informal systems of continuing education. Along with this, it is essential to mount forthwith a well designed adult literacy programme to eliminate massive illiteracy which continues to reinforce conditions of inequality in our society. Without such far-reaching changes in the educational system it will be difficult to erect a more just and egalitarian social order.

Even as we go in for these changes, it will be necessary to make education an activity in which parents and children, schools and homes, formal and informal education for children and adults become an integral part of a common and continuing process of education. In short, education should become a community affair instead of being a governmental enterprise subject to bureaucratic control.

## SOCIAL POLICY

The quest for a fair and just democratic order necessarily involves a new deal for our minorities and disadvantaged groups—the Harijans, the Tribals and the different religious and linguistic minorities. The persisting salience of their problems is indicative of the fact that policy approaches and instruments developed, at the inception of the Republic, for protecting their interests and facilitating their integration are no longer adequate. Change—social, economic and political—over the years has altered considerably the nature of their problems and opened up new options for resolving them. It is time that old modes of perception and action in relation to these



groups are abandoned by the managers of the system, even as there is need for minorities to move beyond mere symbols and antiquarian claims

The overall structural changes suggested in this document must be supplemented by a well thought out social policy. *Ad hoc* responses and fire-fighting actions of the kind seen in the last fifteen years produce only ephemeral results. Nor can considerations of winning elections serve as a guide to policy in the area of minority relations. When problems impinging on the well-being of the whole society itself are involved, short-term political calculations cannot be the primary basis for problem-solving. Complex social problems must be tackled within the framework of a long-term perspective.

There is considerable overlap in the problems of our social and religious minorities. They all share, in large measure, attributes of educational, economic and social backwardness, but each one also has problems specific to itself. It is the latter which need particularly to be kept in mind while devising appropriate strategies and policies for ameliorating the material conditions of the different minorities and for creating in them a sense of trust and confidence in the system.

### **Harijans**

It is time to examine carefully the appropriateness and adequacy of measures adopted so far to ameliorate the conditions of Harijans. The nation's responsibility towards them does not end with the enactment of constitutional and legal provisions for compensatory discrimination, especially since there is no evidence of such steps having produced any significant difference in the lives of the vast majority of the socially oppressed and deprived sections of the community. Reservations and related concessions are hardly the answer to the problems of the Harijans, for such provisions cannot be a permanent feature of a just and equitable social system. This was indeed the premise on which the Founding Fathers had acted. If we still pursue a policy of preferential treatment through a routine extension of reservations, we probably do so more to salve our consciences than out of a genuine concern for the existential problems of the Harijans.

The condition of Harijans today calls for a fresh approach that looks beyond the device of reservations and the existing forms of preferential treatment. Thanks to the dynamism of the democratic process, there is a growing politicization and awareness of their rights among the Harijans. The need is to make this political consciousness a basis for a big push forward in helping Harijans to change their condition. This calls for a number of steps that range from shifting the Harijans from dependence on land and land-based jobs to occupations connected with animal husbandry, community forestry, fishing, small industries and services, to organizing them as the rural poor along dimensions of economic interests and liberating them from the deeply laid cultural

landscape of atrocities and social subjugation in villages by enabling them, wherever possible, to move into an urban milieu so that they can participate actively and fully in economic and political processes without fear of social reprisal.

### **Tribals**

In the case of the tribals, a more discerning approach than the present one is called for. Where original homeland and cultural milieu still survive, as in the North-east, it is necessary to provide fullest opportunity for self-reliance and development according to their own genius and world-view. Years of missionary activity in the North-east has resulted in significant sections of the tribals embracing Christianity. Straddling international boundaries, tribal groups in that area have sought to retain, their identity with the help of Christianity, English language and western music—symbols readily available to them for the purpose. To some perfervid nationalists all this appears to be a threat to the country's integrity. And yet, complex problems of this kind call for a better understanding of processes of social change rather than resort to force or to blunt instruments of other kinds. The delicate problems of identity, acculturation and 'integration' involved here need to be treated with utmost regard for religious diversity and respect for different cultures. It is also necessary not to allow people from the plains to encroach upon these areas and to ensure maximum protection to forests and virgin homelands, so vital to the well-being of tribal communities, through legal and constitutional provisions.

In places where the original homelands have been disrupted and a large measure of ethnic penetration has taken place, resulting in a sense of alienation and degradation among the tribals—as in Bihar, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra—there is need to adopt special measures to end exploitation and racial discrimination, and to compensate for the often illegal appropriation of tribal property.

### **Religious Minorities**

Approaches to the problems of religious minorities have been influenced considerably by historical memories. This has been particularly true in relation to the Muslims. The success of Muslim cultural nationalism signified by the creation of Pakistan produced a strong Hindu nationalist reaction which accorded no legitimacy to interests and claims of Muslims in India while treating them, at best, as residual participants in the new Indian polity. The liberal, secular reaction was to recall the active role of nationalist Muslims in the freedom struggle and hold up Kashmir as a symbol of communal integration. Either way, the communal issue remained enmeshed in considerations of national security and national integration.

The communal environment has nevertheless changed. The years 1965 and 1971 were landmarks. The Kashmir question has been largely defused. The



Muslim Indian has come into his own as an independent category, a rich strand in the fabric of Indian nationhood. The 'nationalist Muslim' epoch is over. The new generation of Muslims are Indians. Secularism must have a new thrust, it must now move from security and integration to creation of opportunity in the vastly changed setting.

Minorities, especially cultural and religious, have a tendency to hang on to outworn institutions and symbols as marks of their identity. This has been particularly true of Muslims. In the psychological uncertainty they experienced after partition, they clutched to Aligarh, Urdu and personal law, and retreated, embattled, into a ghetto of the mind away from the current of change in new India. Periodic communal riots prevent the battle lines from fading. There is also a revivalist element among Muslims as among Hindus which turns to obscurantist panaceas and religious taboos for a solution to the social and economic problems. Such fundamentalism is, however, limited but needs to be discouraged wherever it exists.

The University of Aligarh and Urdu are indeed important symbols. Both should be protected and allowed to prosper further. But neither has a bearing on the real problems of the Muslims, which are those of massive educational and economic backwardness, particularly in the north. Delayed entry of the Muslims into modernizing sectors has left them in the back-water of progress. The need now is to ensure their access to dynamic sectors so that the Muslims can overcome their handicaps and benefit fully from the ongoing processes of growth and development.

Fears and complaints articulated by minorities are often a mixture of the real and the imaginary. It is important, though, that their real grievances do not remain unattended to, neither should unthinking action add to their apprehensions, as did the Freedom of Religion Bill in the case especially of the Christians. There is need to recognize and respect the richness of cultures and religious traditions of our different minorities and to work actively for building a vibrant and dynamic pluralist society envisaged by our Constitution. Doing so, however, requires that obscurantism should not be pampered but opposed firmly as much among the Hindus as among the other religious communities. Cultural nationalism in so much as it emphasises the 'glories' of one community as against the so-called 'ignominy' of the other is not to be tolerated.

#### TONING-UP PUBLIC LIFE

Beyond special measures for ending exploitation and isolation of underprivileged sections and the minorities — which no doubt account for a large part of the schism in our polity — there is need to attend to the more generic maladies that affect the system. There has taken place a large-scale erosion of political morality and the spread of corruption at all levels of public life. We spoke above of the need to curb irresponsible use of democratic rights by

sections of the organized sector. But, in the absence of rectitude in the behaviour of leaders of government, industry and the professions, it is not possible to enforce compliance to norms by anyone.

There are many sources of corruption, and not all of them will disappear even with the strictest enforcement of rules. Crucial to the whole effort at reducing corruption is the need to push through two important measures: the long talked of law on State support for the financing of elections and legislation against defections. These two measures together will go a long way in cleansing political life. They will put an end to the dependence of parties and candidates on big business and eliminate the power of money to influence politics at the time of elections, through financing political parties, or in the period between them, through buying of voters or legislators.

On the other hand, there is need to review the salary structure and facilities provided to M P s and State legislators. The salaries are at present so low and facilities by way of secretarial and other assistance so negligible that legislators are forced either to resort to devious means (such as arranging meetings for drawing D A and T.A., renting out their free quarters and misusing the perquisites available to them) or to become dependent on outside financiers and party bosses. There is need to remove these and other indirect causes of laxity in moral standards among the law-makers themselves.

Steps should also be taken to implement the long held out promise of appointing Lokpals and Lok Ayukts who should act, not just as custodians of public interest, but as energetic and committed fighters against the evil of corruption at all levels. They should be given requisite powers for this purpose and provided the necessary staff and infrastructural support.

Alongside such measures, there is also need to review the institutional arrangements laid out in the Constitution. The basic framework created by the Founding Fathers has stood us in good stead. With time and change, however, new situations have arisen to confound the working of our polity. Existing constitutional provisions and conventions are, in some instances, either inadequate as guides to action, or tend to inhibit more than facilitate stable government and purposive politics, particularly in the States and now even at the Centre. Indeed, the quality of men who run the system is to some extent responsible for the prevailing political conditions, but even the best of leaders may not be able to do very much if there are lacunae in the institutional arrangements of the polity.

Two such constitutional soft spots are those with respect to the role and powers of the State governments and the Union President, particularly in relation to the formation and dismissal of the council of ministers and the dissolution of legislatures. The manner in which governors have tended to act over the years



and the recent developments following the resignation of the Desai government underline the need for some minimum constitutional changes if distortions are to be prevented from marring the working of our system

There are several issues involved in respect to the powers of the governors and the President in the areas mentioned above. One of these is specific to the office of the governor. It relates to Article 356 of the Constitution under which a State is brought under Presidential rule merely on a report from the governor that the government of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. Originally intended to protect the integrity of the Union, this power has come to be used increasingly for promoting partisan interests of the ruling party at the Centre. Political expediency rather than national interest has been the mainspring of action under this Article, making nonsense of our federal structure and of representative democracy and destroying, in the process, the sanctity and legitimacy of the Constitution. Of course, no central authority in a federal polity can operate without the power to apply constitutional sanctions against a recalcitrant State out to jeopardize national integrity. But neither can a federal polity remain federal when such a power is used arbitrarily for promoting party or factional interests. If such power is to be retained, the need clearly is to guard against its abuse by defining the categories of reserve power of the governor in this regard and the manner in which it is to be used.

The two other areas where the nature of the problem is more or less the same, both in the States and at the centre, are those of government formation and the dissolution of the legislature. In the case of government formation it is essential that the head of State should not try to form a government but only try to secure one. This task of the head of State is closely tied with the question of determining which party or alliance enjoys the confidence of the legislature. The existing practice, particularly in the States, has been for the governor to ascertain claims of majority through calling for lists of supporters or the parading of legislators. A similar procedure has recently been used by the President at the Centre. Doing so involves the head of State in political battles when he should not only be above them but also be perceived as being so. That is why it is essential that issues of majority and confidence must be tested only on the floor of the legislature and not through lists and parades before the head of State, either in the States or at the Centre. This, in fact, is the recommendation of a committee set up by the Governors' Conference following the experience of defections and instability in the States after the 1967 elections. It is a recommendation endorsed by the Administrative Reforms Commission and the 33rd Emergent Conference of the Presiding Officers held in April 1968.

The question of dissolution of legislatures is somewhat more complex in that there are negative conse-

quences in both avoiding dissolution and automatically going in for it when a government falls. The former leads, as it has in the States, to the emasculation of the powers of a chief minister to control factionalism in the ruling party and to providing a fillip to the process of defections. The latter puts the system under great strain by leading to frequent elections, particularly in situations like the one existing presently in the country, when no party has or is likely to have a clear majority of its own. Both these aspects will have to be considered in deciding on what is to be done in this regard. But whatever be the solution, it is important to so devise it that the element of subjectivity and capriciousness is eliminated from the exercise of the power of dissolution by both the President and the governors.

## CIVIL LIBERTIES

Adequate arrangements for safeguarding human rights and civil liberties are a must. No society can ever be fair and just if the rights and freedom of groups and individuals in it remain unprotected. Though essential, constitutional guarantees are not enough in themselves to ensure the continuance of an open society. Recent experience underlines the need to erect other institutional barriers to prevent all attempts to subvert our freedoms. The stress on decentralization earlier in this document goes part of the way in doing this. It is necessary to supplement decentralization with other measures which seek to create areas of autonomy and of public accountability within and outside the structure of government.

To this end, it is necessary, among other things, to free the press and the electronic media from all State controls. Freedom of the media must be underpinned by full autonomy for radio and television and the development of a vigorous community press that reaches down to the people. In an open society freedom of information is fundamental to rendering authority at all levels accountable to the people. We can no longer accept any exceptions to this rule, there is an urgent need for taking the necessary legal and constitutional steps in this regard. Recent experience points to the need to extend the principle of accountability even to the police and intelligence systems. No State, to be sure, can do without them but these need to be governed by an unswerving commitment to the civil rights of citizens. One way of guaranteeing this would be to subject intelligence operations to objective external review without, however, jeopardizing essential confidentiality.

Above all, a just and humane society must recognize the supremacy of human rights which represent the conscience of mankind and transcend legal and even constitutional rights. India has recently ratified the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights which give teeth to the Human Rights Charter. But its failure to ratify the related optional protocol, which would permit an individual to complain about any infringement of these rights, is an omission that must be made good.



## DEFENCE AND FOREIGN POLICIES

In the areas both of defence and of international relations our policies have been reduced to periodic incantation of 'full preparedness' and 'non-alignment'. Actually the former means whatever our preparation happens to be, and the latter means whatever foreign policy we happen to adopt at any given point of time. Most often, after any event, we discover that we were neither prepared nor non-aligned and then proceed energetically to lock the stable after the horse has bolted.

Absolute security against all is unattainable. The quest for absolute security leads to the national security State. Friendship based on mutual trust, international cooperation based on mutual benefit, and mature diplomacy based on mutual respect are the best guarantees for a country's defence. Military preparedness must, therefore, be geared to very specific threats. Otherwise one's own military preparedness is perceived as a threat by others and this inevitably leads to an arms race. This is why it is necessary to establish a National Security Council to oversee the country's defence policy and foreign relations in a broad and long-term perspective.

Maximization of national interest can no longer serve as the highest goal of foreign policy in this age of inter-dependence. The major thrust of foreign policy must be to search for areas of commonality while reserving differences with a view to reaching a negotiated settlement. Accordingly, the strategy of isolating one's adversaries or seeking to match their strength or overwhelm them through the acquisition of more and more sophisticated weaponry, including nuclear, must be abandoned. Complementary exchange of commodities, travel and cultural exchanges must be positively encouraged, particularly within the region. India, by virtue of its size, resources, geopolitical position and as a major civilization of Asia must take the initiative, not the leading role, in working towards an Asian community. The Himalayan rivers, the economic and cultural complementarities with the countries of South, South-eastern and West Asia provide the basis on which a new structure of relationship can be based. These considerations apply with much greater force to our neighbours in South Asia where efforts must be made to create soft borders and work towards arms reduction through negotiations.

The Indian defence forces have developed in a haphazard manner in response to (a) the narrow needs of the three services and (b) the desire to match, and preferably achieve superiority over, the corresponding service of one's adversary. This state of affairs needs to be radically altered. India must go for a system of integrated defence based primarily on India's own assets in R & D, manufacturing capability and trained manpower. The system of integrated defence would not match navy to navy, air force to air force and army to army, nor would it seek to achieve parity in specific weapon-systems. Instead, it would seek to develop a 'total mix', drawing upon

the strong points in our indigenous capability to deter the adversary. Such a strategy will also enable us to gradually terminate the import of weapons.

## TOWARDS A NEW DEMOCRATIC CONSENSUS

It is not necessary to go into any greater detail of policy initiatives needed for reorienting the political, economic and administrative structure. The measures and initiatives suggested above, and the broader approach to socio-economic change outlined earlier, are all to be seen in the larger context of generating in a short span of time a process of fundamental structural change in the Indian polity and its social base. What is involved is nothing less than making the political and economic structure respond to the far-reaching changes that have already taken place at the grass roots of society, changes that are still under way and are likely to gain further momentum and acceleration in the years to come. The basic approach is to stem the drift which characterizes the democratic political process today and to eliminate conditions conducive to Bonapartism or other forms of authoritarian intervention. In the changed social and political context it is imperative that we create a new national consensus and promote social cohesion on the basis of a new alignment of social and political forces.

### Role of Citizens

This statement is being issued at a time when the Indian polity has led itself into a deep morass and calls for a fundamental realignment, not just a realignment of party elites and electoral positions, though no doubt it is towards the latter that the approach laid out here will ultimately take us. There is need for determined intervention on the part of all concerned citizens to initiate this process. There are no soft options before us when our basic freedoms are endangered and when the people's struggle for a just socio-political order through an open polity and through their own efforts is sought to be undermined by creating confusion in the public mind. The only soft option available to us is to accept the authoritarian solution. We must categorically reject that.

For this, it is imperative that those who feel committed to Indian democracy and its performance in critical areas of public concern should come out into the open and make their voices and demands felt. The fast deteriorating political and economic situation demands this and there is no time to lose. Nor is it possible any longer to leave matters entirely in the hands of party politicians and the agents of the State. This is a country full of diverse skills and capabilities and ripe with opportunities for major breakthroughs in economic, technological, social and cultural spheres. It is the larger framework of governance and political management that is in crisis. Unless that crisis is resolved, all other achievements can go under. The situation calls for a determined intervention by those who care for the country and its future.



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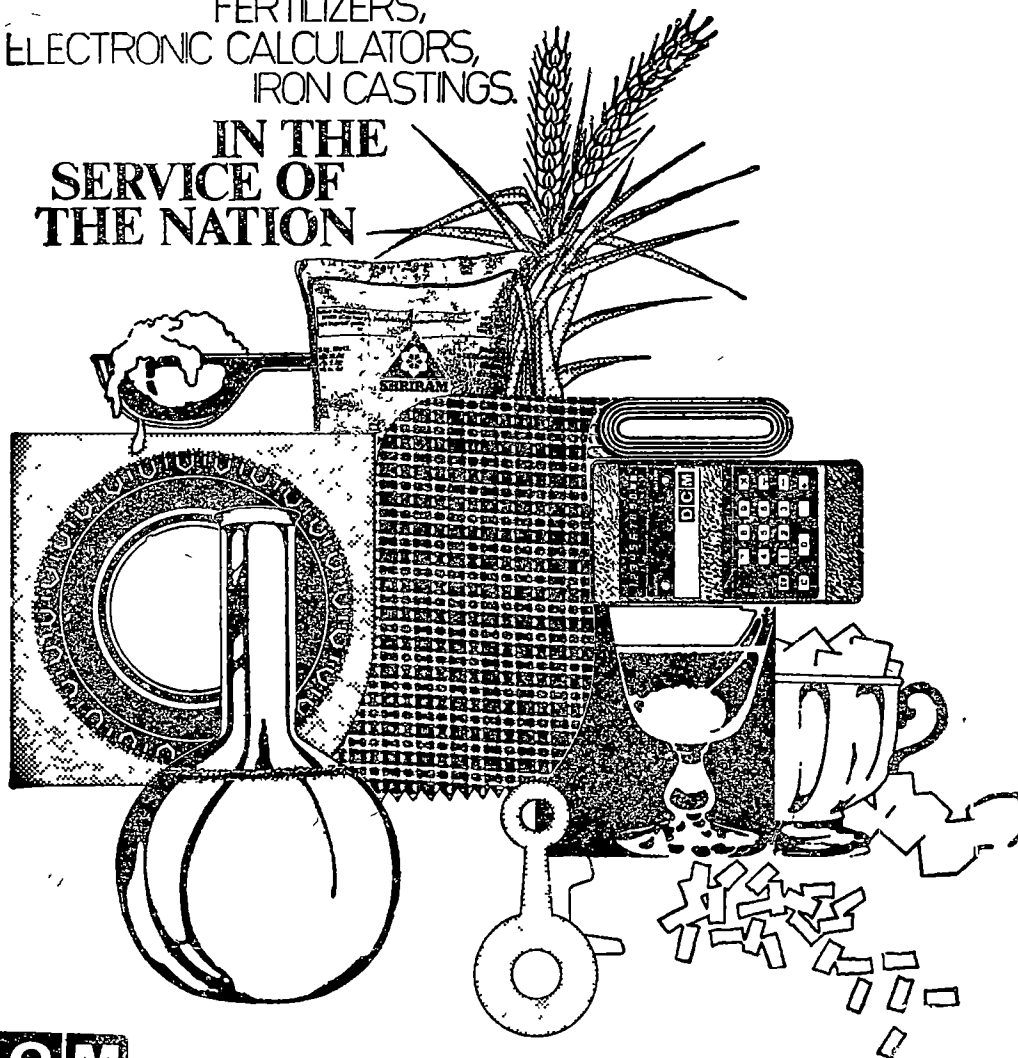
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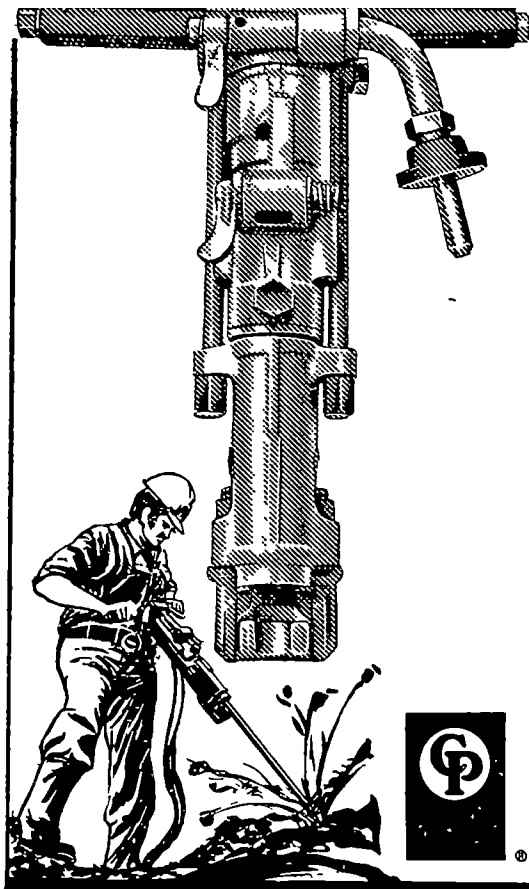
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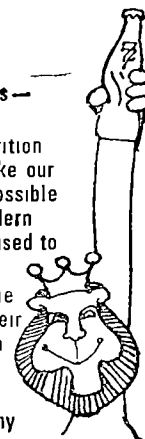


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The Coffee Board works for the growth and development of the Indian Coffee Industry. The Central Coffee Research Institute is located in Balehonnur of Chikmagalur District of Karnataka State. The Research Department has helped considerably in the scientific growth of Coffee Plantations.

### AREA UNDER COFFEE

State	Arabica (Hectares)	Robusta (Hectares)	Total (Hectares)
Karnataka	68,369	32,557	100,926
Tamilnadu	26,705	5,520	32,225
Kerala	2,926	49,718	52,644
Andhra Pradesh	1,529	29	1,558
Assam	684	50	734
Other States : Orissa, W Bengal, Andamans, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra (Experimental Plantations)	358	2	360
	100,571	87,876	188,447

India's estimated production of excellent coffee is about one lakh tonnes.

Coffee that is grown has to be processed or cured. There are 31 Coffee Curing Establishments in the country. A whole range of operations in the country contribute to the quality of INDIAN COFFEE. Careful picking of the Coffee fruits, scientific processing, curing done to set standards, and quality assessment leads to export of only the best coffee beans.

Coffee exports during 1978-79 realised foreign exchange worth 155 crores of rupees.

Current efforts are aimed at increased production in traditional areas and bringing non-traditional areas under coffee, thus ensuring adequate supplies to meet increasing trends in exports and international consumption of the future.

**COFFEE BOARD, INDIA**



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### The farmer today—reaping the fruits of his labour

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### The common man today—assured of his needs

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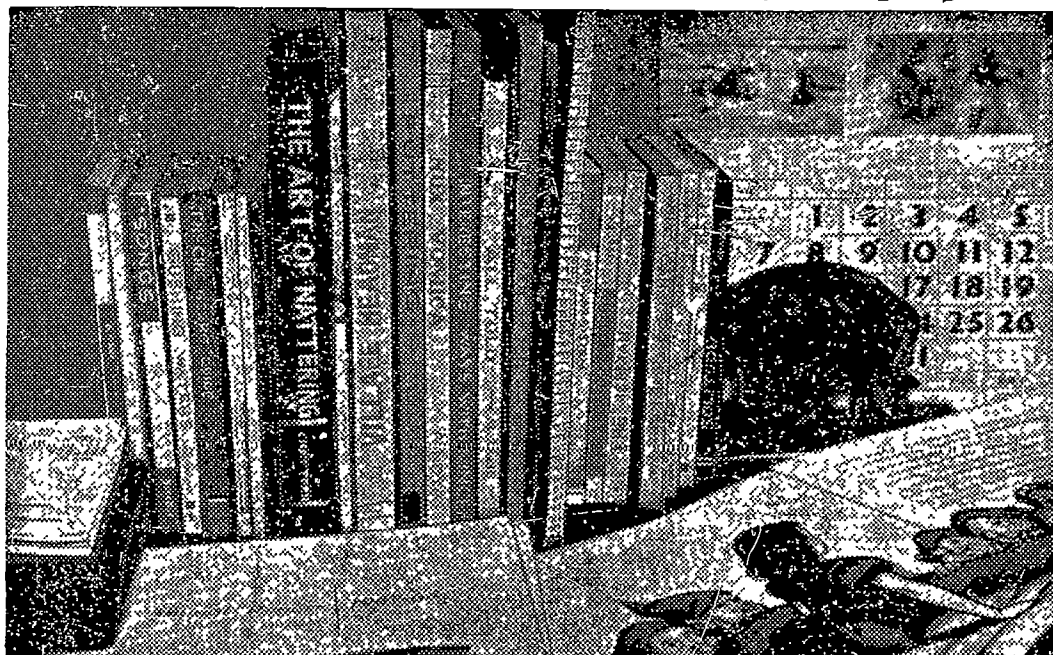
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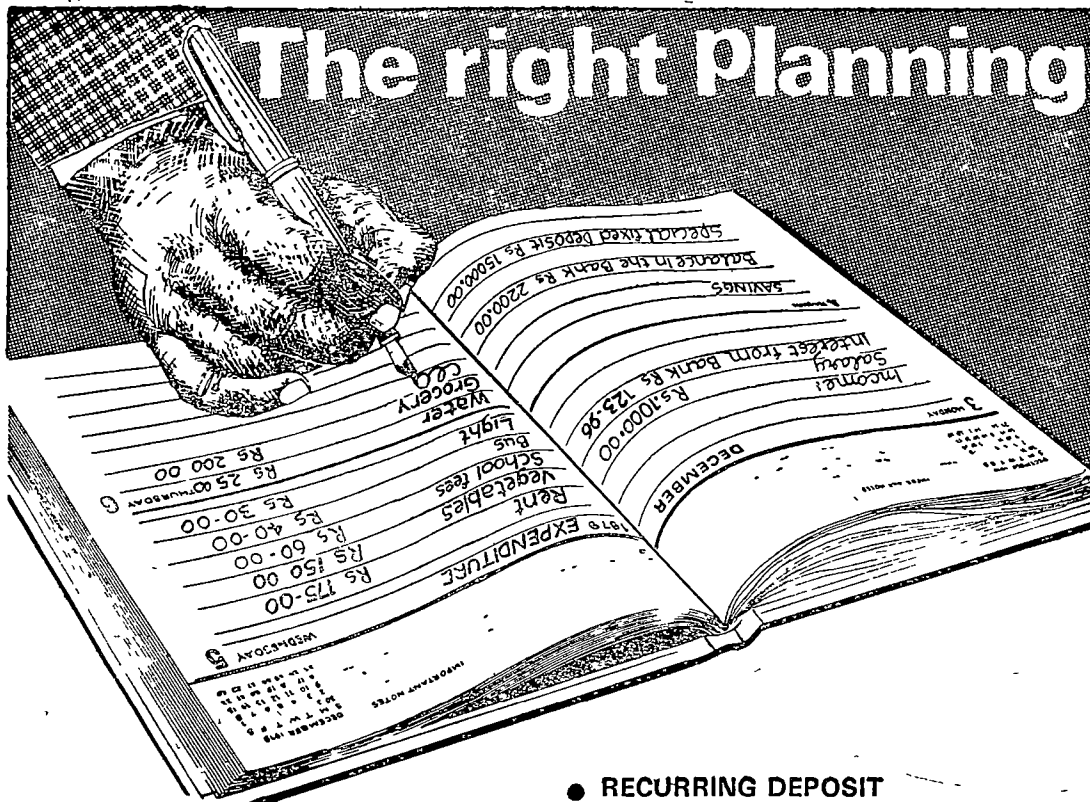
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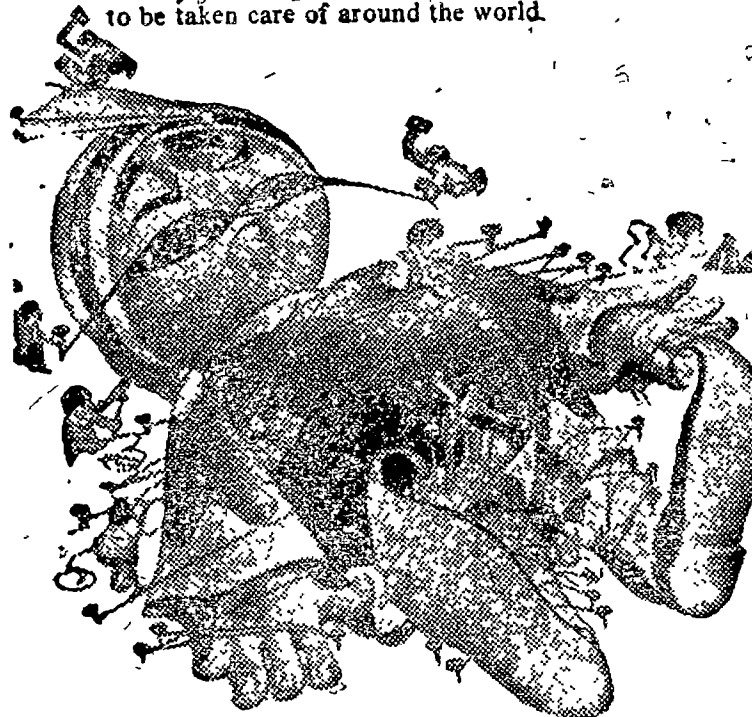
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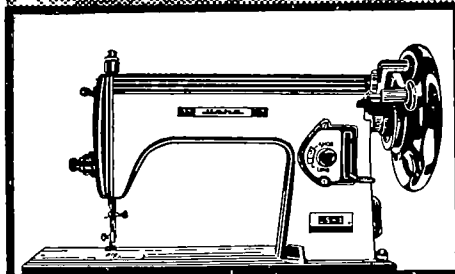
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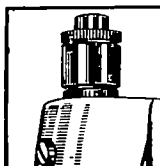
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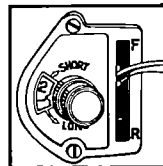
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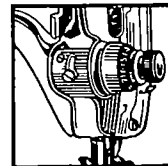
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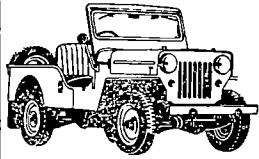
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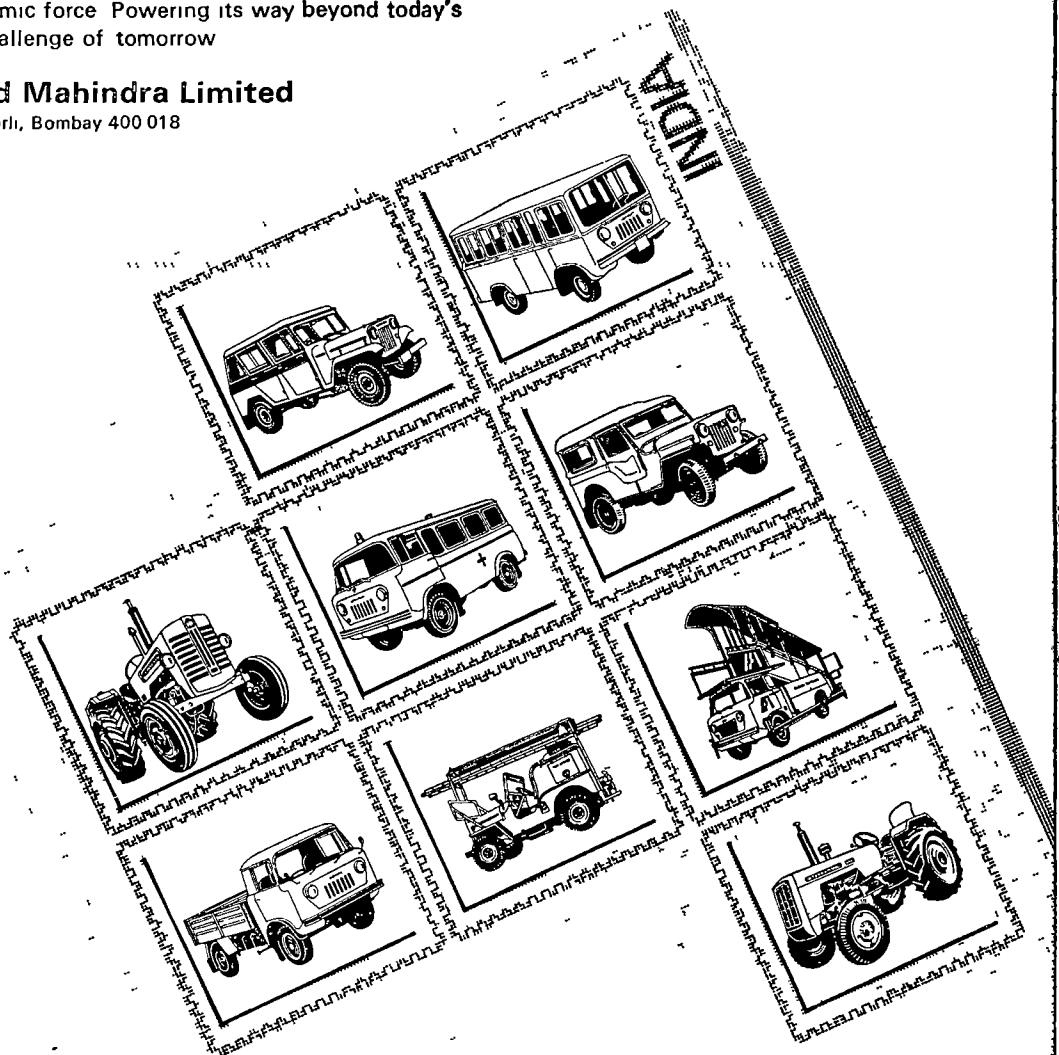
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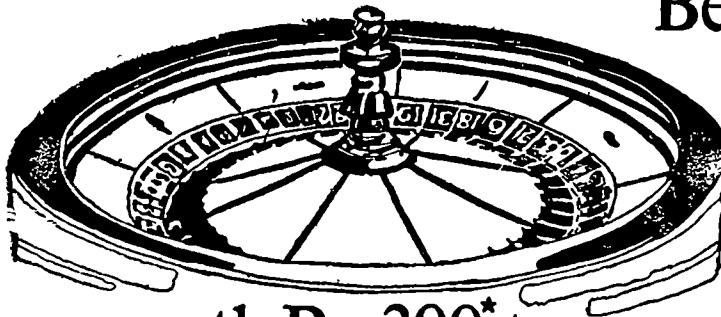


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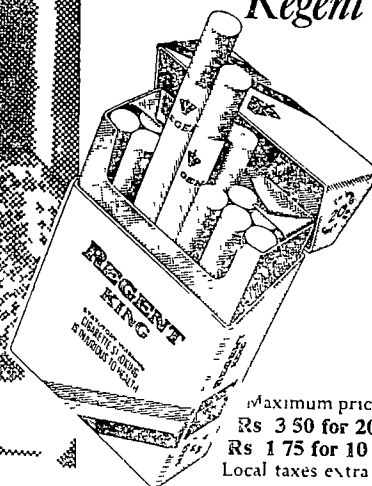
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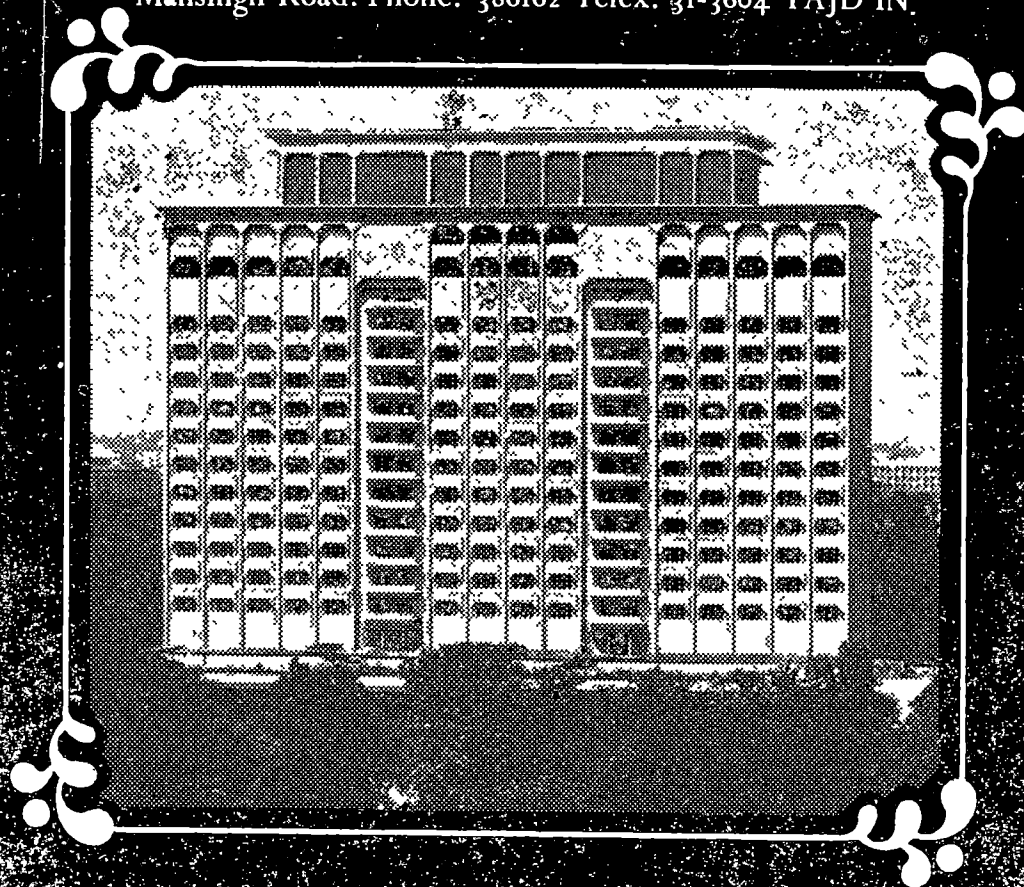


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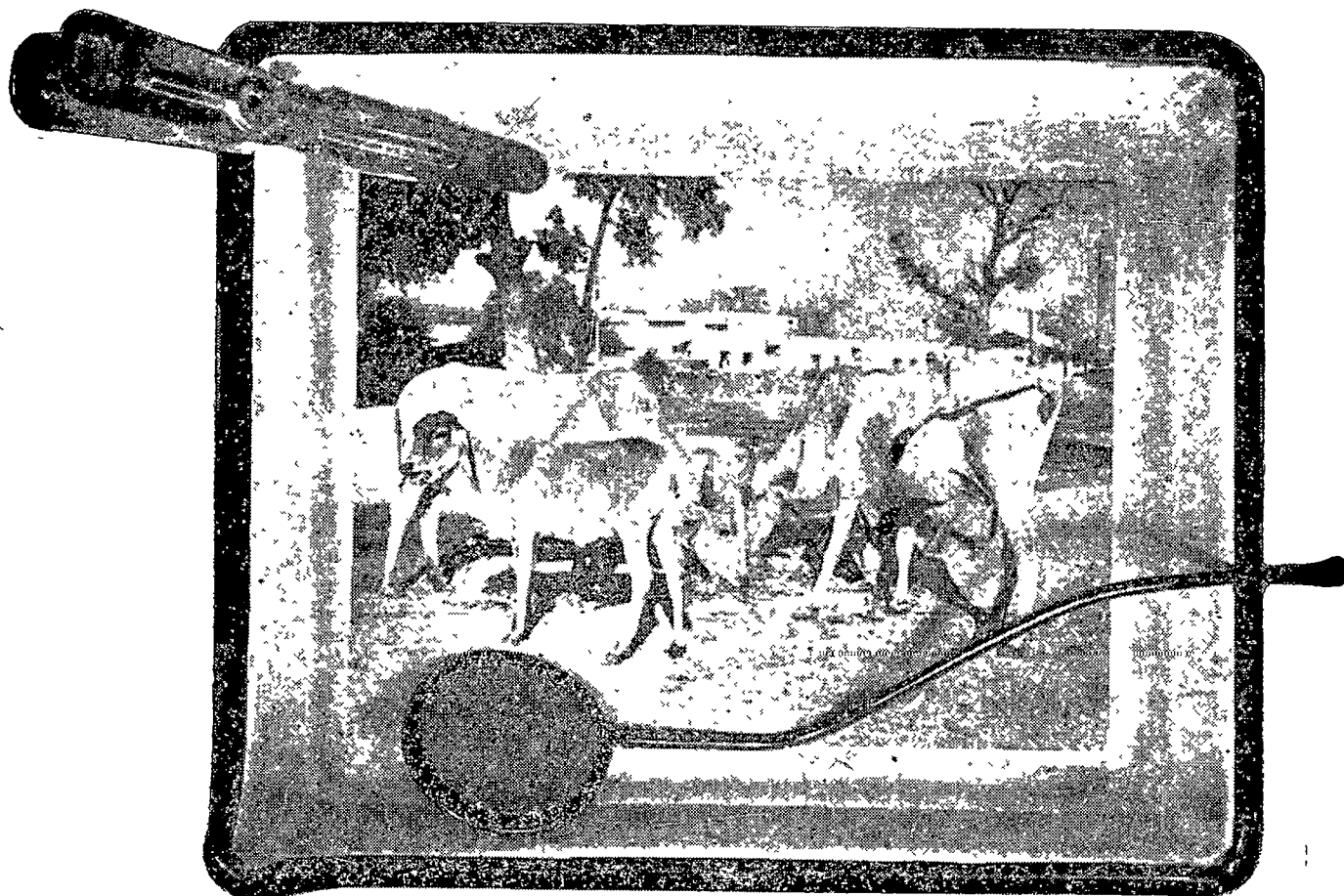
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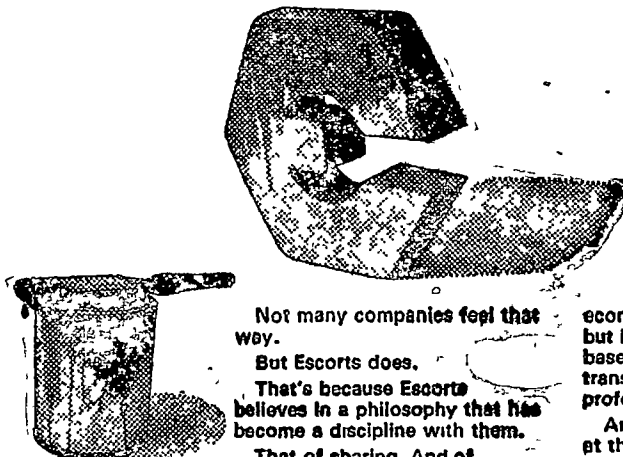
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**NEXT MONTH : THE PLANETS**



# 246

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options before us

symposium participants

### THE PROBLEM

A short statement of  
the issues involved

### THE SUPER POWERS

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### FURTHER READING

A select and relevant bibliography  
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### COVER

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# The problem

WE have for some time, and with a certain lazy satisfaction, mouthed the formulations of the theorists of non-alignment without ever bothering to assess the critical threats disrupting the region over which India is supposed to exercise some influence and, presumably, authority. The Vietnamese and Iranian developments, involving our own regional alignments, should have offered adequate warning. And, now, the Soviet armed forces are in physical occupation of a non-aligned nation very much in the Indian sphere of friendship and influence — that is, if we are determined not to surrender the habitable world for division among the men who manipulate the levers of power in Moscow and Washington. The swings within the Indian Foreign Office are indicative of either our confusion or our inability to carry conviction to the politicians who come and go, each believing in the divinity of his/her absurdities.

We are now at the centre of a serious cross-examination of tested policies. What are the critical connections between the Iranian-Afghanistan situation? Are we sought to be made into hysterical observers of Asian destabilisation because powerful interests are once again moving to isolate the Soviet Union? Why is there no serious analysis being done of the immature handling of US foreign policy in the region, particularly the naive faith placed in armament deliveries and such acts of 'commitment'? To what extent are our troubles heightened by the presidential election calculations in the USA and by the factional manoeuvrings which condition the exercise of power in the USSR? Can the erosion of the *detente* between the super powers be ascribed to earlier diplomatic failings between Moscow and Washington? Are we too easily forgetting the achievements of the *detente* between the super powers as the first frightening signs of discord appear?

With the non-aligned headquarters silent in Havana, with the majority of the



non-aligned supporting a resolution in the United Nations calling for the withdrawal of foreign forces, whatever persuaded India to indulge in traditional responses (abstention at the United Nations and support to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan)? Obviously, it was the equally ridiculous traditional response of the USA on the question of arming Pakistan and working for a pact with Peking. But surely the situation by its very nature called for an initiative which would halt the destabilisation of the region being caused by the threat of escalation in armament supplies, an initiative which would have strengthened the detentist sentiment in Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Burma and Sri Lanka—and perhaps made for more sober thinking in China and Vietnam. India had nothing to lose even if such a move were scoffed at by her traditional opponents. Now, loose talk on Afghanistan will cost us another Rs 1000 crores in military expansion and preparedness.

The foreign policy of a country like India, if it is to be anchored to integral national interests and removed from the narrow and limited calculations of political managers who are increasingly oblivious of national sovereignties, dignities and the frameworks of firm global arrangements, it will have to move out of the present swamp of non-alignment to a more categorical working out of relationships in Southern Asia. Unless this groundwork is completed, there is danger that we will continue merely to react simplistically and in dazed manner to situations which we do not really understand or influence. It is one of the diplomatic facts of today that India has devalued itself in international affairs, and we know this devaluation is not a post-Emergency phenomenon. In this issue of SEMINAR we hope to spark some light on the problems of meaningful external action. In many ways, nineteen eighty marks the beginning of a new phase in international diplomacy.



# The super powers

RAJESHWAR DAYAL

INDIA'S relations with the super powers have been rather like those of a capricious and reluctant damsel towards two jealous rivals, the one impetuous and immature, the other ardent and exigent. Not that she is the only object of their courtship, as the suitor's wealth and vigour attract willing conquests. The desirability of the damsel has been fluctuating in the esteem of the suitors, but not in her own. This has aroused, from time to time, feelings of hurt pride and has led to mutual accusations of infidelity and ambivalence.

But the damsel is no longer so young and inexperienced, she has become a full grown woman, and tantrums and waywardness ill become her. The suitors are also becoming paunchy and middle-aged and losing their ardour. Mature people should have a mature and responsible relationship even in a *menage a trois*. They have their

separate interests and concerns but there are also many interests in common. Durable and mature relationships can be built only on identifying and developing areas of common interest and mutual benefit. Since no formalised association is contemplated or is possible, since it would bind the weaker to the stronger, besides evoking the hostility of the other super power, it would clearly be advantageous to develop relations with both on a basis of equality and mutual benefit, while reserving one's own freedom of action and of choice.

Foreign policy is not made in a vacuum but must be related to the complex of circumstances and conditions prevailing in the country towards which it is directed. That does not, of course, mean that it is merely a reaction to policies and events that are shaped elsewhere, it should anticipate them and, if possible, try to



influence them. But, for the process to be coherent and consistent, one's own interests must first be clearly perceived and resolutely pursued. A foreign policy will fumble if it is based on the exigencies of the moment or on emotionalism and sentimentality and not on enduring interests and values.

Bilateral relations are two dimensional and, to be durable, must be based upon a mutuality of interests. The policy makers must, after clearly identifying their own country's interests, explore the common ground which alone can provide a firm foundation on which to build the edifice of durable mutual relations.

**L**et us first examine the proposition—India and the super powers—in reverse, and see how the super powers have viewed and pursued their relations with India.

In the early years after India's independence, both the United States and the Soviet Union were deeply involved in India, both seeking to build up their influence in what they regarded as a potentially significant area of the world, but pursuing different means and with different ends. The United States, chagrined at the loss of China to the communist faith, saw in India an alternative object of its affections, a country of comparable size and importance, which had achieved its independence on a wave of Gandhian idealism. Here was a democratic bastion which could be strengthened and sustained as a bulwark against the spreading wave of communism.

The Soviets, for their part true to Leninist ideology, saw the road to Paris via Calcutta, and India with its vast social and economic problems, appeared to provide fertile ground for ideological conversion. The liberation of the former colonial countries was attributed, at least in part, to the success of Soviet arms in World War II, and Moscow thought that the new nations turning against their former colonial masters would look towards the Soviet Union as their friend and liberator.

Both super powers were proved wrong in their different perceptions.

India proved unwilling to accept United States' tutelage and protection or to join with it in its anti-communist crusade. Equally, India proved strong enough to resist Soviet blandishments and the pro-communist putsch attempted in Bengal and Telengana, or to have forced on it what it regarded as an alien ideology.

**T**he error of both super powers was to regard India not as an end in itself, but as a means to promote their respective interests in the cold war. The example of India gave heart to other newly independent countries similarly under pressure from the two giant powers. The disillusionment felt in Washington and Moscow was the result of their regarding those who were not with them as being necessarily against them. Nehru had repeatedly declared India's policy to be one of friendship towards all and enmity towards none. Friendship could be based only upon equality, mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs and not on domination of the weak by the strong. From this developed the five principles of peaceful co-existence and the doctrine and practise of positive non-alignment.

Both super powers looked upon India's declared policy aims with profound scepticism and mistrust. John Foster Dulles denounced non-alignment as immoral and expedient, the Soviet Union decried India as a 'running dog of British Imperialism' and Nehru as the 'Chiang-kai-shek of India'. Neither recognised India as genuinely non-aligned in the cold war, but rather as pandering, behind a facade of sanctimonious platitudes, to the interests of the rival power.

The United States, in its frustration turned to Pakistan as the pivot of its policies in the area. In its perception, Turkey and Iran were under the military threat of the Soviet Union while South East Asia was threatened by Chinese expansionism. The geography of the two wings of Pakistan provided evident strategic advantages in meeting these supposed threats. Pakistan's feudal-military rulers were found to be more amenable to American blandishments than India's clamorous democracy and Pakistan's Islamic pretensions were regarded as

a powerful bulwark against the atheistic doctrines of communism. Pakistan was therefore set up as the coping stone of the Baghdad Pact (renamed the Central Treaty Organisation after the 1958 revolution in Iraq) and the South East Asia Treaty Organisation.

The fact that Pakistan's avidity in joining these military systems was due not to any anti-communist ideological convictions, but to its eagerness to secure a vast supply of arms with which to face its Indian neighbour, was lost on US policy makers. Therefore, without winning over a reliable ally, the United States lost the opportunity of gaining India's friendship. The policy of buttressing up Pakistan as a military power, and therefore of confrontation with India, has been disastrous both to the peace and stability of the area and to the interests of the United States itself.

The effort to establish a false equation between India and Pakistan and partisanship on the Kashmir issue, soured Indo-American relations, despite extensive U.S. food and economic aid. The Soviet Union countered the building up of Pakistan as a military base ostensibly to threaten its 'soft under-belly', by rapidly developing its relations with India by providing political support and military aid.

In the early 1960s, the Kennedy administration, taking a new look at the Soviet Union's Asian policies, belatedly discovered that they were largely political and only marginally ideological, but no longer military-strategic. It therefore reacted by shifting the emphasis of its own policies from the military-strategic to the political. The theory of containment of the Soviets in West Asia was abandoned, but that of the containment of China was retained by both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

**T**he roles of India and Pakistan vis-a-vis China were now reversed. The 'bhai-bhai' era was suddenly disrupted by serious border tensions between India and China culminating in the humiliating war of 1962. Pakistan, meanwhile, abandoning its part in the containment of China, developed close ties with it, making



nonsense of its western-dominated military pacts. At the same time, Khrushchev fell out with Mao tse-Tung and relations between the two communist giants hurtled downhill with alarming rapidity.

India found a common interest with the two super powers in restraining Chinese expansionism and aggressiveness. The United States now diluted its alignment with Pakistan and began to build up its relations with India, a process greatly helped by the prompt military aid which it provided following the 1962 border war. India's more constant relations with the Soviet Union, which were earlier held as an obstacle to better relations with the United States, no longer stood in the way because of the common threat from China and the gradual abatement of the cold war. The United States no longer looked with suspicion upon the Soviet military, technological and economic assistance which India was receiving, thus tacitly recognising Soviet interests in the region. When the 1965 conflict erupted between India and Pakistan, the United States was content to let the Soviet Union play a mediatory role and steadily to enlarge its presence in South Asia.

**P**resident Nixon's 'opening to China' again led to a rearranging of pieces on the international chess board. The containment of China policy was finally abandoned and Washington began to share Chinese concern at the expansion of Soviet influence in South Asia. Pakistan, as the intermediary in arranging the Nixon visit to Peking, found itself in renewed favour with the US administration. When the 1971 war broke out, the Nixon administration strongly backed Pakistan, while the Soviet Union, which had earlier entered into a Treaty of Friendship with India, equally strongly supported India. The period of the Nixon Kissinger 'tilt' about which so much ink has been spilt since the publication of Kissinger's controversial book, marked the lowest point in Indo-US relations.

The fiction of equating India and Pakistan, so hurtful to Indian sensibilities and so contrary to facts, was finally dispelled with Pakistan's deci-

sive defeat and disruption in the 1971 war and the emergence of Bangladesh. India stood out as the dominant power in the region, an incontrovertible fact now tardily recognised by Washington.

The coming to power in 1977 of new governments in Washington and New Delhi led to a more realistic reappraisal in both capitals of their mutual interests and relationships. India's position as the dominant power in South Asia was fully accepted, and an era of more mature and responsive relations commenced.

**S**oviet policy towards India, after the Stalin era, has pursued a more even course. The Soviet Union was not long in recognising that India's non-alignment was genuine and viable and largely instrumental in keeping the expanding group of newly independent countries out of the cold war and away from western-sponsored military systems. Pakistan's involvement in anti-Soviet military pacts propelled the Soviet Union towards India, as well as India's potentiality as a counter-weight in the growing rift between the Soviet Union and China. Besides, India's size and strategic importance and its undoubted influence as the leading non-aligned nation served as a channel between the Soviet Union and other newly independent countries of Asia and Africa. Moscow's support for New Delhi's policies and interests helped to neutralise Washington's support of Islamabad, and Soviet arms aid to India was more than a match for that received by Pakistan from its western patrons.

Moscow's growing role in South Asia was exemplified by its successful mediation in the 1965 war and its attempt to build up its influence with Pakistan by offering arms aid to it in 1968. The Soviet Union tried to mediate in the 1971 war between India and Pakistan, but its offer was turned down by India, which preferred to negotiate bilaterally. The Brezhnev Doctrine, never clearly defined, but obviously aimed at building up a front against China, has kept cropping up like King Charles's head but the torso has never been joined to it, and there is no indication as to the sort of creature that

would be conjured up. Moscow apparently hoped that the Treaty of Friendship concluded with Mrs Gandhi's government, would be the precursor to India's acceptance of the Doctrine. But the Doctrine still remains a disembodied spirit. While Soviet interests have undoubtedly prospered in the area, they have not reached a point where the Soviets can hope to play a pre-eminent role in the policies of India or of the other countries of South Asia.

**A**gainst this background, how have India's policies towards the super powers evolved and what have been their motivations? Towards the Soviet Union, there was in India a strong element of sentimentalism and admiration for the Soviet role in World War II combined with gratitude for its strong advocacy of the liberation of the oppressed peoples of the world. The Soviet Union was regarded as a progressive country building a new society, the friend of all good causes.

Jawaharlal Nehru was strongly drawn towards Moscow and greatly impressed by Soviet achievements. Stalin, however, spurned Nehru's overtures as he regarded India as a mere camp-follower of the western powers, whose independence was illusory and which was of little consequence in the international power game. There was little that India could do to change Moscow's attitude until Stalin's successors, notably Khrushchev, realised that India's friendship could be to their advantage. They offered political support against Pakistan — which had meanwhile joined anti-Soviet military alliances — on the Kashmir issue, and launched a modest programme of economic aid.

Towards the United States, the Indian attitude was ambivalent, seldom appreciative and frequently testy and critical. It was based on a negative sort of sentimentality and not on a hard look at the cold facts or an assessment of the country's vital interests. True, the Americans contributed to the strain in relations by errors of psychology and of policy thus forfeiting the considerable advantages which were theirs for the taking had they shown a little circumspection and restraint. The



munificent food and economic aid which could have earned rich dividends in goodwill became almost an embarrassment both to the giver and to the recipient.

The main policy differences between the two countries in the early '50s concerned the Korean war. American arming of Pakistan and support over Kashmir widened the rift and Krishna Menon's sharp tongue and irascible ways at the United Nations were a constant irritant. The homilies which flowed from New Delhi were regarded as hypocritical and were countered by pettinesses and tail-twisting by Washington.

India's support of Nasser and Arab nationalism ran directly counter to the abortive Eisenhower Doctrine which it helped to torpedo. There were also sharp differences of perception in regard to the American obsession with the containment of communism, which were accentuated by India's ambivalent attitude towards the Soviet invasion of Hungary. The Diego Garcia base is a more recent bone of contention.

**T**he approach of neither of the world's two biggest democracies towards the other has been mature and reasoned. The United States persisted in seeing world and bilateral issues in the sharp contours of black and white. If a country failed to stand up and be counted in the ranks of the anti-communist crusaders, it was regarded as lost to the 'free world'. No allowance was made for the other's traditions, historical experience and background or to its domestic, regional or global interests. Everything had to be fitted into a set mould fashioned in Washington.

India, for its part, paid little regard to the United States' global concerns or to its well-known sensitivities. Occasional expressions of gratitude for help received would have demonstrated magnanimity on the part of the receiver and would, given the American psyche, have been received with generous appreciation. Even genuine policy differences, if expressed in the language of restraint and of reason, and not publicly aired in harsh and carping terms, need not have occasioned so much mutual irritation and distrust. During the

Korean war, for example, when American blood was being shed on the battlefield Sir Benegal Rau's soft words backed by hard facts at the United Nations, won the respect and admiration even of those who disagreed with India's stand. This elementary lesson in diplomacy, Indian spokesmen, alas!, found it difficult to learn.

It is of course true that when one noisy democracy deals with another, much comes out into the open which had best be left buried underground. But dealing with a different sort of society, there is much less chance of tensions surfacing, and there is little to which to react publicly. With the Soviet Union, when there were policy differences there were few ripples on the surface, even when there was turbulence in the depths.

**T**he Soviet Union chose its options with skill, taking full advantage of the opportunities which offered. When the Americans began to arm Pakistan, Soviet military assistance to India became readily available. Soviet political support over Kashmir helped to neutralise American backing of Pakistan. While the United States looked askance at India's socialistic five-year plans with their emphasis on industry, the Soviets welcomed the planning process and helped in the building up of heavy industry. The rupee trade agreement provided new export markets for India's developing skills and an outlet for its industrial products. In the war with China and the recurrent clashes with Pakistan, Soviet military and political support was invariably extended to India. The Soviet image in Indian eyes was therefore that of a loyal and steadfast friend, whose support can be counted upon in good times as in bad.

But while there was this spectacle of competition and sometimes of confrontation between the super powers in India and South Asia, their basic aims were not so divergent after all. Indeed, as one American statesman described them, they were common, complementary or compatible. But, they were also competitive. American strategic interests were not directly involved in the Indian Ocean area except to

the extent of safeguarding vital oil supplies from the Gulf and West Asian areas. Soviet strategic interests were also largely limited to keeping the lines of communication open with its Eastern provinces and blocking their attempts to build up anti-Soviet groupings in the area. India's insistence on keeping the Indian Ocean area as a zone of peace, free from great power rivalries, affects both super powers equally.

On the nuclear issue, both super powers have been of one accord. Both are equally opposed to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear capacity and both have exercised equal pressure on India in regard to the signature of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. But it should not be forgotten that the United States and other western powers have contributed nuclear know-how and material to India, while the Soviet Union has not. Yet, it is the United States which has borne the brunt of Indian displeasure over the issue of supplies to the Tarapur reactor.

**O**n the question of a better economic deal for the developing countries and a more just and equitable world economic order, the two super powers are equally reluctant to budge from their privileged positions. Nor is their attitude any different on the issue of equitable sharing of the resources of the ocean floor between the haves and have-nots. They both appear to interpret and practise the Biblical saying that 'to him that hath, more shall be given, and to him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath'.

But while the Soviet Union has hitherto pursued its policy interests with restraint and circumspection, there has been an element of immaturity and stridency in relations between New Delhi and Washington. Since the advent of the Carter and Desai governments, there was less mutual involvement between the two capitals. Reason and persuasion and a balanced approach had taken the place of public posturing. Even when there were differences, they were not so openly and vociferously aired. The United States withdrew from the ungrateful and self-appoint-



ted role of policeman of the world. Its emphasis on the importance of human rights, the liquidation of the vestiges of colonialism and concern for the progress of the developing countries found an answering echo in New Delhi. India, in contrast to the violence and turmoil in the neighbouring countries, presents a picture of comparative calm and order, despite its noisy politics and the self-serving antics of some of its politicians.

**T**he friendship and understanding of powerful friends could be of inestimable benefit to India's technological and economic progress, and could strengthen its security and enhance its influence. Now that India's two main concerns on the economic front, viz, food and foreign exchange, are out of the way, there is a unique opportunity to strengthen relationships without any undue feeling of obligation or dependence. The foreign exchange position is secure with reserves at over 6000 crores thanks to the enterprise and thrift of Indians abroad, whose home remittances continue at a steady pace.

With enormous reserves of food, one can at last hope for a respite from, if not a solution of, India's chronic food problem. The vast accumulated assets of food and foreign exchange, instead of becoming a burden, an *embarras de richesse* could have been set to work to build up the country at a rapid pace with the aid of the most advanced technology. Concurrently, the family planning programme should be vigorously and intelligently pursued. India needs a new slogan in place of the time-worn clichés 'More production, less reproduction'.

The super powers have the capacity, if they have the will, to help powerfully in the regeneration of the country. If India can demonstrate that there is a determination to forge ahead and not just to shuffle along, the gaps in our technology and organisation can readily be filled. The old picture of India being a bottomless pit, a burnt out case, must give place to one of a resurgent and vital country resolved to push ahead. With a vast reserve of inadequately employed technicians and engineers, a sizeable industrial base,

extensive but idle foreign exchange reserves and burgeoning food stocks, all the ingredients for rapid advance are to hand. They should all be applied intelligently to the neglected tasks of development.

India will earn the respect not only of the super powers, but of the entire world, if it can demonstrate that it is a vital and resolute nation, with a maturity of mind and steadfastness of purpose. For far too long has independent India been regarded as an object of charity or commiseration, a house divided unto itself, profligately wasteful of its opportunities, a vast mass of starving humanity, passively content to hobble along in the wake of the advancing nations of the world. China has won the respect and admiration of all not for its doctrines based on a mixture of Confucianism, Marxism and Maoism, but for the determined and self-reliant manner in which it has tried to set its own ancient and dilapidated house in order. India, on the other hand, seems to have abandoned the noble ideal of Gandhi's Truth based on service and sacrifice as well as its ancient spiritual heritage.

**T**his vast country is best likened to an elephant — its national animal — and it differs in every way from a bear, tiger or lion. In the jungle, the elephant is held in respect by the entire animal kingdom while it follows its own peaceful ways. It does not interfere with other animals, be they tigers or jackals, nor do the other animals interfere with it. It does not vaunt its enormous strength and it can perform incredible feats of endurance. But if the elephant is lamed or hamstrung, it is the most vulnerable animal there is and even an ant can destroy it. And it is easily tamed, a puny human sitting astride its neck, can make it do his bidding. But a point is reached when even the patient and long-suffering elephant can take no more. The first object of its wrath is its keeper whom it pulls down and tramples underfoot. This is a lesson from India's long history which should never be forgotten by those who may be raised to take command of its destiny.

Now that the Indian masses have decided to sweep away the flotsam

and jetsam of splinter parties and the swarm of defectors and opportunists and have replaced them with a monolith, India's voice and, above all, its deeds, could again proclaim its pre-eminence in the world of the non-aligned. The self-conscious attitudes of the past, of petulance and initiation towards one of the super powers and of undue deference towards the other, could give place to one of true partnership and equality, based upon a mature and responsible attitude towards the world and regional problems of the present and of the future.

But the prospects have suddenly become clouded by events in West Asia which will inevitably retard the process. The resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism could distort the perspectives of a large segment of the non-aligned States, diluting the world-wide impact of the policies of non-alignment. When the outburst of zealotry — which is now at its dizzy peak — abates, as abate it must since human destiny does not move anti-clockwise, the movement could be restored to its pristine vigour. India could certainly help in the process, what with its large Muslim population, by strengthening the constructive and progressive elements of Muslim urges, and exercising an influence in the direction of moderation with the neighbouring Islamic nations. It could thus help greatly in the process of stability in the region, it would assure the world's oil supplies, and it would earn the gratitude of the world, including the super powers who behold the spectacle of Islamic resurgence with utter bewilderment.

**T**he massive armed intervention of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan has suddenly confronted India and all the sub-continental States with a situation of ominous proportions. For the first time since Genghis Khan and the conquering Mughal hordes, a super power has leapt across the national frontier of the sub-continent — the Hindu Kush — and appeared at the Khyber Pass. The Mughal policy of pushing the frontiers of their Empire to the Hindu Kush and of the British to insulate Afghanistan from Imperial Russia, has been overturned. The long-standing role of Afghanistan as a buffer between the



Soviet Union and the Indian sub-continent appears to have suddenly come to an end

The Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation concluded in December 1978 between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan has been invoked to justify the intervention. Its fourth clause states that both countries shall consult each other, and by agreement take 'appropriate measures to ensure the security, independence and territorial integrity of the two countries'. Presumably, as a result of such consultations, the Afghan Government is said to have invited the Soviet troops to deal with internal and external threats to the security and independence of the country. The massive air-lift of Soviet troops and armour began about December 25-26, 1979 and a day or two later, President Amin, who had ostensibly invited the troops, was killed and a new President, Babrak Karmal, was flown in from exile in Eastern Europe to assume the reins of power.

How long the occupation will last, it is yet impossible to say, but that Soviet influence, if not presence, is ensconced across the Khyber for an indefinite length of time, goes without saying. The traditional role of a buffer between Russia and South Asia which Afghanistan had played for centuries — with much skill and determination, has been overturned. This faces India and its neighbours with a vast and complex problem involving their security and independence. It faces the world with a new and far-reaching reshuffling of the cards of world stability and balance. The process of detente has been reversed, the SALT-II treaty placed in jeopardy, and set the world's chancellories in extreme agitation about the new and not so smiling face of the Soviet leadership.

**T**he attitude of the super powers is one of angry confrontation, the one threatening and defiant, the other nervous and excited. These are dangerous attitudes for the peace of the world when the situation calls for a calm response on the part of one and a studied and concerted effort on the part of the other. It places on the States most immediately affected, the imperative need to devise a self-protective strategy in concert with

each other, for unity in adversity is the sole protection of the weak. After long centuries, the sub-continent is now encircled to the West, North and North-east by a super power and a potential super power — China.

In a ham handed manner, the Americans have taken the one action that they should have avoided like the plague — unilaterally and as a nervous reflex — the offer of arms to an unwilling Pakistan, and thus, at one blow, to have antagonised Indian public opinion. They may think that the Indian reaction is exaggerated, if not paranoiac, and that some 150 million dollars worth of arms, in terms of modern weaponry, is a flea-bite. They should have known that India has an extreme distaste for the bite of this particular flea. The only consultations which they have held — besides rushing to the United Nations — have been with their own western friends and not with the sub-continental States, which after all, know best where the jackboot on the Khyber really pinches.

**S**ince the issue, far from being academic, is one of real and immediate portent to the very security of India and other countries of the sub-continent, in order to restore stability and world balance, it is incumbent on them all to stand up to the situation in a determined and concerted manner, instead of each reacting individually either out of instant local considerations or a fit of nervousness, or worse, out of pique and offended dignity. For this is surely a case where unless all hang together, each may hang separately.

The quarrels between the countries in the lee of the Himalayas are, by comparison largely of a domestic and psychological nature and rather boring to the rest of the world. But the situation that faces them today across the Khyber is of truly Himalayan proportions. Could they not defer their squabbles for a time at least to study together the significance of the common problem that has suddenly reared its head and agree to take a common stand. For it is not Pakistan's problem alone, that at least should be clear to all the States of the region. Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India have all issued differing

statements which reveal more their fears of offending one super power or the other than their real fears and interests.

**N**ot so, however, at the United Nations, where a large group of non-aligned States has been emboldened to take a joint and forthright stand in support of a non-aligned member. India should not appear as a timorous giant when lesser States have shown a degree of moral courage, it would then be out of step with the vast majority of the non-aligned countries and, once again, stand to lose its moral and political authority with the group, as well as forfeit the respect and attention of the rest of the world. The policy of non-alignment itself is in peril. If India could take a stand on American intervention in Vietnam, where also the terms of a treaty were invoked, could it remain silent and passive now? What needs immediately to be done is to hold joint consultations with the frightened neighbours, a common stand based upon a common assessment, could follow. Such a stand would be heard and heeded by all to whom it is addressed.

A possible side result could well be that in face of a common danger, the internecine quarrels between the sub-continental States would be seen in a new and greatly diminished perspective. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that, given a degree of wisdom and statesmanship, they may even be settled, or at least, alleviated. As a result, the accrual of strength to India and its neighbours could be enormous, and it would then not be easy for any outside power, super or not, to offend against the pride or interests of any of the countries of the region. And those six or seven States—India included—which have signed treaties of friendship with the Soviets could feel reassured that that treaty could not be invoked in the manner in which it has been done in Afghanistan. The sub-continent could then take care of itself and it could reject the unwanted and patronising solicitude of others.

The times need far-sightedness, courage and vision. Will this land of Ashoka and Akbar, of the Buddha and Gandhi, prove worthy of its great heritage?



# Islam rises again

SAMAR SEN

ONLY the most malignant would belittle the contribution Islam has made to the world's history and civilisation for nearly 900 years, from A D 650 to the close of the 17th century. Muslim contribution in every field has been immense, and perhaps more impressive in its spread and impact than of any earlier religion or culture in a comparable span in history. This trend was essentially led by the Arabs, but was powerfully supported by the Turks, Iranians, Moghuls and many other races who were rapidly and increasingly coming under the influence of Islam. The Arab technique in creating this phenomenal rise in human knowledge and culture was simply to adopt whatever the Greeks, Romans, Hindus, Byzantines and other ancient civilizations had to offer, improve on their achievements, add their own scholarship and innovation and then let the new knowledge and technique go where they would.

Their success was remarkable in mathematics and astronomy, Kepler, Copernicus, Galileo and Newton

learnt valuable lessons from the Arab scientists who in turn had based much of their observation on Ptolemy the encyclopaedia (Canon) of Ibn Sina (often known as Avicenna) on medical knowledge was compulsory reading for all serious students of medicine in European universities even as late as the 17th century. Many such examples could be given in practically all branches of art and science.

This magnificent role of Islam began to dwindle with the advent of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, by the time the Ottoman Empire collapsed (Nov 1922 when Sultan Mohammed VI fled Turkey) it had ceased to be of any consequence. There had been earlier set-backs but the process of contributing Islamic values and knowledge had continued in spite of them, thus, after the 7th crusade when the Byzantine Empire had practically come to an end and the intellectual and cultural civilization of the Arabs had passed to Europe and its Renaissance, Islam continued its progress eastwards and southwards. The reverses in Spain in



the 11th century were accepted, but there were compensations in many parts of Africa where Arabic language and Quranic Law and faith spread in ways which recalled the propagation of the concept of a Roman 'citizen' in Europe over a thousand years ago

However, by the end of the 18th century, religio-political power of Islam had crumbled, and the values, prowess and the political doctrines of Western Europe were making headway with astonishing speed and success in all directions of the globe. Islam thereupon entered a phase of decline and despondency. The humiliation was nearly complete when Kemal Ataturk abolished the Caliphate to the shock of Muslims everywhere, but especially of the Indian Muslims who were then in the forefront of a movement to make the British restore the provinces dismembered from the Ottoman Empire.

**T**he position of the Muslims in the subcontinent has always been unusually complicated. Numerically they are very large indeed, being over 200 million people today or about a third of the entire Muslim population of the world. At the time of the partition of India in 1947, the Muslims accounted for nearly 80 millions or 20 per cent of the total population of an area now comprising Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. This was a very large number in absolute terms and yet they lived in a land where the non-Muslims out-numbered them 4 to 1. They were thus not large enough a community to hope to have and hold political power in any democratic system of government in the area as a whole, and yet too large to be totally absorbed in the majority community. In this respect — and in this respect only — they resembled in some ways the blacks in the USA.

But, there were deeper complexes, many of the forbears of the Muslims of the subcontinent had come from outside and subdued the local population. Not unlike the Aryans who came perhaps two millennia before them, they were conscious of the doctrine of 'varna' — a doctrine which they indeed found deeply

embedded in Indian society. In course of time, these Islamic conquerors married, raised families and settled down in their new home. Their descendants, together with all those who had been converted to the faith, became acutely conscious of their historical role as rulers.

So, a minority community, now to all intents and purposes consisting of sons and daughters of the soil, came to consider themselves in many ways superior to the majority community and were understandably more sensitive and more bitter than the other communities at the rise of British power in India. For their own reasons, the British themselves followed a policy which did nothing to assuage these feelings, however, with the rise of Indian nationalism the British tried to build up Islamic consciousness and the Muslim community as a counter, but did not altogether succeed.

By and large, these factors explain why the Muslim community in the sub-continent is unable to relax with ease and comfort, and why quite frequently it becomes self-conscious to the point of being unnecessarily assertive. In Kuwait or Casablanca, in Benghazi or Basra, the Muslims are completely free from these inhibitions, they would tell you that religion was a matter between a person and his god and then sit back and discuss all matters without any trace of self-consciousness or a historical hangover. The establishment of Pakistan and Bangladesh has not solved the problem of the Muslims in the subcontinent — perhaps we all need to think less of the past and more of the future.

**M**eanwhile, the degradation of the Muslims on a global scale continued unabated country after country with a majority or large Muslim population came under western domination. European values spread everywhere and Islamic societies were put under severe strains. Different sects appeared determined to modernise Islam, but in fact they behaved not infrequently as apologists and romantics on behalf of Islam. Conflicting dogmas, lack of political power and a general inability to unite and move forward in any direction came to

bewilder and bedevil the world of Islam.

In this atmosphere, the United Nations decided to establish Israel chiefly because the Europeans had a conscience to clear. But the price was exacted from the Arabs, many countries were opposed to the UN decision, but the Arabs could not work together politically and far less bring about any changes in the status of Israel by military means. The USA made a total commitment in support of Israel which in consequence found any number of 'reasons' to expand with ever-growing loss and shame to the Arabs. The nadir of humiliation seemed to have been reached, the pill could not be more bitter.

**B**ut then came one of those events which change history without anyone seriously planning to do so — the Egyptian campaign against Israel in October, 1973. Suddenly the Arabs were electrified, they gave up their despondency and threw away their lethargy for a while it looked as if some ancient spark had broken through centuries of deceit and disillusionment. Responding as usual to the events in Arabia, the Muslim world as a whole became aglow with hope and pride. All the current ideologies looked askance — all were aware that some new forces had been let loose, but none could be sure what they were. And 'whither hurried hence'?

Arab fortune held, and the Egyptian campaign was followed by the most dramatic economic action ever taken in recorded history — oil prices began to be fixed by the producing countries themselves. Loud protests and remonstrances went up all over the world, but the producing countries stood their ground. The middle-eastern oil producers declared with warm understanding that those countries which faced genuine difficulties because of rise in oil prices would be helped by them, but that the rich countries, which had directly or indirectly exploited them over the decades could expect no concession.

Since most of the important members of OPEC follow Islam, Muslims all over the world underwent a sea-change as a result of the new-found



bargaining power of the oil producers. Moreover, they have been true to their avocation of helping the needy, priority of their generosity was given to Arabs, followed by Muslim countries and finally all those who were in real distress. In the process, a large number of competent financial institutes were established to assess the requirements of each country and today the Arab international aid has exceeded 7% of their GNP. As against this, the industrialised countries, including the USA and the USSR, are still to reach the UN target of 7% of GNP to be given as foreign aid. Only 4 or 5 West European countries, (e.g., Scandinavia, France, Netherlands) have reached 1% against the Arabs' seven per cent.

In this context, the trefail of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan represent political forces which we may expect to manifest themselves in other Islamic countries in one form or another during the next two decades. Afghanistan has leant to the Left when most people outside the Marxist ken continued to see some contradiction between Islam and communism. Many brands of Islamic socialism had already been in vogue, but even a preliminary analysis showed that these socialisms were rather synonymous with different prescriptions for welfare States. The leaders of these countries simply wished to use the popular Islamic sentiments to the extent possible in the pursuit of welfare States as conceived by them.

**B**ut other forces operating in Afghanistan have little to do with Islam or Marxism. The great-power politics is as evident as the fact that, whether Pakistan wishes it or not, her soil is being used in bringing about various pressures (e.g., refugees) and counter-pressures (e.g., Mujaheds) on the Afghan scene. The tribal problem has receded in the background, and no one can know in the prevailing flux which way the Baluchis, the Pakhtoons or even the Kurds would act and react. The Tarakki regime fell or was replaced, but violent opposition of varying magnitude continued in the outlying areas and Amin's regime was marked by an unprecedented increase in the number of political

executions and prisoners and violent, but not always successful (for whatever reasons), engagements not only with the rebels but with other groups whose opposition to Amin was more on Marxist-Leninist ideology than on his continuing to use State-power.

As a result, the country presented a picture of disarray in which a large-scale military intervention by the Soviet Union took place. The theory that the Soviet Union can quickly restore order and will then withdraw its troops as soon as Babrak Karmal is in a position to rule, has as many speculative aspects as the gleeful prognosis in the western press that the Soviet Union has created its own Vietnam and that too at its doorstep.

**I**n Iran the picture is more perplexing. Islam is the cry and Ayatollah el-Khomeini is the muzzenin, but what is meant by Islam (the majority of Iranians are Shias) and whether Khomeini's view has been generally accepted are still open questions. Before the students raided the American Embassy early in November 1979 and took a large number of hostages, many believed that the pro-western forces and values so assiduously injected and cultivated by the Shah and the ruling elite could not but leave some permanent mark. This is no longer so evident, and Iran with its long history and tradition seems to be seeking new adjustment of international laws and values that have ruled the world hitherto.

The battle for such a basic struggle will be long, and its successful outcome will remain uncertain for many years to come, even as the peace in the area continues to be threatened for one reason or another. Since all that Iran stands for today has been obtained under the banner of Islam, the air is heavy with talk of Islamic resurgence, revival and renaissance.

In Pakistan, not only has no revolution taken place, but the call to Islam has been used primarily to discredit PPP politics and their leaders (including Bhutto), and the Shariat has been evoked more to maintain

law and order than to give a new orientation to people's life. The inheritance of democratic values from pre-partition days seems to have been brushed aside, the rule of the army has been made unavoidable and all the internal conflicts and confrontations are hopefully expected to disappear with time and with political anaesthetics to be skillfully administered by the country's military men.

Pakistan's ambition to be the leader of the Islamic world remains unabated, although it can never be given much public expression for fear of offending munificent benefactors like the Saudis and other Islamic oil producers, and of course such revolutionaries as President Gaddafi. Nonetheless, the events in Iran and Afghanistan have created many serious problems for Pakistan, the principal among which concerns its relationship with the USA and USSR. The sacking of the American Embassy in Islamabad and all that followed are now being pointedly overlooked by the Americans in their desire to aid and arm Pakistan 'substantially' in order to halt further 'Soviet expansion' from and through Afghanistan. At the same time, Pakistan faces a Soviet warning of grave consequences if the refugees (insurgents?) continue to be armed, sustained from Pakistan.

With Egypt nearly isolated in the Arab world, some Pakistani leaders could have found the situation favourable for a little more successful bid for leadership in the world of Islam, but other developments in the area counsel a degree of self-abnegation, at least for the time being. Predictably, much of the talk of an Islamic nuclear bomb and of an Islamic military force originated from Pakistan and almost equally predictably Pakistan would continue to deny any such ambitions.

**A**part from the rather startling developments in these three countries, there have been some attempts by the Muslims in the Philippines to secure better rights, newspapers have reported the recrudescence of Islamic sentiment in the Soviet Union in areas adjoining Turkey, Iraq and Iran, and the Indian Muslims had, before the recent Indian elections,



become more vigilant, allegedly in the face of such Hindu revivalist movements as seem to have stepped up their activities.

The other side of the picture is presented by the dissension among the Arabs, particularly about the treaty President Sadat has signed with Israel. The argument of the vast majority of the Arab States is that even if the Arabs were not or could not be united, even if military action against Israel would not or did not succeed mainly because of US and western support for Israel, even if the conflict for the restoration of Arab rights and the establishment of a Palestine State took an unconscionable number of years, it was better to put up with these difficulties rather than compromise on principles and give a public display of disarray and disunion.

The Egyptian contention is that no principles have been sacrificed, and that given the Arab weakness (e.g., loss of more and more land in each successive military engagement with Israel, and suspected reluctance of the Arabs in making the necessary sacrifice in blood and treasure for an infinitely prolonged confrontation), it is better to come to terms with Israel with the help and commitment of the U.S.A. who have no intention of abandoning Israel, but can be helpful in working out terms which could be fair and acceptable now, and which could be improved upon in the future as Israel and the Arabs get to work together. The controversy rages unabated and does not in the least contribute to what is labelled as Islamic resurgence.

While substantial sums of money from oil have been put to use for helping the people of the exporting countries, quite evidently much of it has found its way to the western world to pay for many sybaritic hobbies and delights. Rich Arabs have bought much land and property in Britain, U.S.A. and other western countries and have often paid prices the natives would not even consider. Arab investments in the capital market and Arab spending on consumer goods in these countries are eagerly sought and many conveniences and inducements are being offered to

achieve these ends. Notices in Arabic, a plethora of restaurants and eating houses offering Arab food and a general desire to accommodate Arab whims and fancies and even occasional display of arrogance.

Much of all this activity is natural on both sides. There is no reason why the oil-rich people should not enjoy themselves with their newfound money and in circumstances in which the restrictive conditions of their own countries do not operate. Equally, the countries which offer these pleasures and amenities would expect to make whatever profit they could. The difficulty is to fit these activities into a pattern of Islamic renaissance that so many western media are so vociferously talking about.

Clearly, with oil income running into billions (beginning with a 60 billion-dollar surplus in 1974), even in small areas with less than a million people (e.g., Kuwait), the Arabs can legitimately feel that they can no longer be pushed around, bullied or sneered at. The events in Iran and other countries have given them and others a sharp elation in their past, and an aptitude for resisting western values which until the present had seemed so overwhelming. The western media recognise and accept this new outlook, and were showing commendable signs of cooperating with it until the recent shocks at Teheran and Afghanistan. A satisfied Islamic world would bring many immediate material benefits to the western countries and indeed might, through a combination of Islamic ideology and the boons of a materialistic civilization, keep the Soviet Union and its ideology very much at bay and in the background.

There is thus much to be gained in speaking interminably about Islamic revival with all its glories and achievements, but if it meant encouragement to destructive forces and to latent revolutions with increased opportunities to the Soviet Union, then some caution is clearly indicated. The present western attitude is thus a mixture of awareness of Arab sentiments and feelings, and of insistence that international relations — not merely the handling of

the hostages in Teheran — must be conducted by rules as promulgated and understood by the West. Even-tual solution will depend on whether the two sides can look on each other as equals, the danger of being prisoners of western values must lurk eternally in many Muslim minds.

In the meantime, two questions continue to haunt the Islamic world, while oil money can bring material welfare, and Islamic revolutions, actual or incipient, would satisfy many atavistic and religious instincts, the rising tide of nationalism could increasingly come in the way of Muslim unity and brotherhood. Already we see many signs of it even among the close neighbours in the Islamic belt in North Africa and spreading eastwards to India, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania, Iran and Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan — to cite only a few instances. The conflict of national interests would naturally be exploited and spurred on by foreign ideologies.

The second important difficulty is that in today's world, technology is of supreme importance and the various Islamic States have taken no great or determined measures to train their men and women in science and technology, on the contrary, the oil-rich Muslim countries are importing more and more skilled technicians from western countries at prices which would have been unimaginable a few years back. All efforts to build up military arsenals, including nuclear weapons, capable of asserting Islamic will in any 'just' confrontation, without an adequate and independent technological base and superstructure, can only be wasteful of resources.

Several theories have been offered to explain the timing in the changes taking place in the Islamic countries. Some experts consider it simplistic to assume that oil profits can wholly, or even principally, account for the developments in such widely separated places as Manila and Dacca, Tripoli and Mauritania. Some would read these developments as part of a world phenomenon in which disillusionment with purely material values combines with a corresponding



desire to seek spiritual solace, to the extent of tolerating, even welcoming, a measure of obscurantism and of the esoteric

Still others would suggest that the present exultation in Muslim lands is but yet another index of the rise of intense nationalism, and as such represents an interesting phase of anticolonialism — the political domination having been rejected some time ago, financial and cultural bondage have to be torn asunder as well — oil money simply helps the process.

Yet others believe that all ideologies and religions are undergoing some profound and fundamental changes, and the present trends in Islam must not be separated from what has been taking place elsewhere — in the capitalist world, in the communist countries as well as in many traditional but non-Muslim societies

**I**n these circumstances, except for those who believe that life and civilization began only from that day in 610 A.D. when Gabriel called on the Prophet Mohammed on Mt. Hora to rise and proclaim, the rest of us must be acutely conscious that Islam's contribution to civilisation has been and will be a continuing process like all other religious and great movements. In this, Islam will draw its sustenance from the past, will adapt itself to the present and hope to move forward into the future

Those who think that Islam will revert to the ways and prescriptions of the earliest Caliphates seem to overlook that over the last thousand years Islam and Islamic laws have been subjected to many interpretations, that many devout sects have worked out different ways of serving God within the precepts of the *Koran* and that this flexibility can well serve in the future in adjusting and adapting Islamic practices. The penal code of Islam which is given effect to from time to time in some Muslim countries, together with their insistence on several past and outmoded social customs and values, has been referred to by many as proving that this much vaunted flexibility was a myth.

On the other hand, it is demonstrably clear that when new political social or religious movements start, the leaders often wish to support them, especially in the early stages, by appealing to some well accepted old values and rules, and sometimes even by giving effect to them

**T**hese changes in the Muslim world around us may indeed be considered as revolutionary but do they presage an Islamic renaissance or resurgence? Apart from the hurdles which these revolutions have still to overcome, a resurgence would once again bring its contribution to arts and literature, to science and medicine, to engineering and architecture and to navigation and geography to the immense benefit of mankind. We could then recall the stirring examples of such men as Ibn-Battuta, Al-Beruni, Al-Khawarizmi, Firdusi and a host of others who have done so much for human knowledge and whose works could indeed inspire the new men of a resurgent Islam. But there is no sign that such an effulgence of human achievement is about to be repeated. Much will depend, it seems, on Islam's ability to adopt and adapt modern technology, science and finance for the service not merely of Muslims but of mankind as a whole

Meanwhile, the Islamic world can be sure that it will no longer be subjected to constant humiliation and ill-concealed contempt and dejection. Islam can be confident that from now on westerners will no longer sweep aside all criticisms or take little account of the views and values of over 600 millions of the earth's inhabitants. What we are witnessing may not be an Islamic resurgence but at least an assertion of pride and spirit after centuries of despondency and disillusionment. Even if Islam is not being reborn, the present upheavals would make sense to many of us if they presaged the restoration to some extent at least of the enlightened and urbane Muslim culture that existed before the crusades. The tolerance and breadth of intellectual interest of those ages past stand in outrageous contrast with later religious manifestations in which both scholarship and wisdom so sadly declined



# Across north and south

BHARAT WARIAVWALLA

EMPEROR Bokassa of the Central African Empire murdered school children Mrs Gandhi of India under the Emergency carried out a policy of forced sterilization General Idi Amin of Uganda delighted himself by making political prisoners copulate in his presence Human dignity is assaulted in many parts of a world that the ethnocentric French chose to call the third world

A rich variety of authoritarianisms dot the political map of the third world There are the dictatorships of development like South Korea's and Brazil's There is a dictatorship designed to serve God like Khomeini's and there are dictatorships forged to serve the pecuniary gains of mortals, like Marcos' and Samozza's This far from exhausts the types of third world authoritarianisms There are corrupt monarchies, one man rule, ruling elites practising black magic, etc

There are also a few democracies in the third world There is the Venezuelan one that performs and there is the Sri Lanka one that does not, there is the sham democracy of Mexico and the utterly debased one of India These dictatorships and the tottering democracies of the third world largely deny their citizens liberty but most stridently demand international equality Divided in all else, the third world is united in its demands for a new international economic order

Since the energy crisis of 1973, the old north-south cleavage has acquired a salience it had never had before Here I am not suggesting what many third worlders and some westerners do that the north-south relationship has now replaced the old east-west relationship as the central axis of world politics Far from it The east-west rivalry still determines the con-



tours of international relations and it is the overlapping of the east-west and north-south relationships that is crucial to the understanding of the rich-poor cleavage

It is in this international setting that India has acquired a role it never had before. We like to believe that it was in the fifties, when the east-west rivalry was at its peak and therefore the resultant manoeuvrability of the non-aligned movement was at its height that we enjoyed the greatest status and influence in the world. Since then, it is argued by some here, that our influence has ebbed because of poor leadership. Only dynamic and assertive leadership can make us regain the status we enjoyed in the third world in the fifties and the early sixties, so say some influential Indians. No doubt poor leadership since the death of Nehru and the ever present stodgy South Block bureaucrats for whom punching a hole in a dossier is the essence of policy making, are largely to be blamed for the absence of direction in our policies in the sixties and the seventies.

But that is not all. An entirely new constellation of forces and alignments have come into being since the Soviets and the Americans nearly collided at Cuba in 1962. The Soviet-American detente has not eliminated but qualitatively transformed their competition. The defeat of an American conceived world order in Vietnam, the Kissingerian great power triangle, the US-USSR-China, (which Brzezinski also plays but without as much success) the extreme resource vulnerability of the West which the crisis of 1973 demonstrated, are some of the turning points in global politics. How dismal is our comprehension of them! Non-alignment, genuine non-alignment, the Panchsheel, are the standard chants our leaders sing when they are overwhelmed by events.

Let us leave the question of leadership to be resolved by our intelligent electorate. India is today poised to aggravate or ameliorate rich-poor tensions, to impair or repair the north-south relationship. Three things account for our capability to do this one, we are poor, populous and large, two, we are among the top advanced industrial countries of the developing

world and, three, our people are steeped in the values of western liberalism to a degree no third world people are.

Some 800 million people of South Asia, a little less than a third of the third world's combined population, are at the very bottom rung in the scale of poverty as drawn up by the World Bank. It is our and our neighbour's poverty that can upset a stable interdependent world which the rich north and the rich among the poor of the south, the oil producers, would like to bring about by negotiations and periodic threats of confrontations. The concern the north and the prosperous part of the south display for the poor developing countries stems not from altruism but self interest. Surely when the national security adviser to the American President, Brzezinski, asks how long will Paris or Pittsburgh maintain its affluent life style in face of the sprawling ghettos of Calcutta or Conakry, he is saying that the prosperity of one is threatened by the poverty of other.

Similarly, the new rich of the South show concern for their poor confreres. A dismally poor Afghanistan, Somalia or Yemen does eventually threaten the newly acquired wealth of the oil producers, though here it is the feeling of religious solidarity that accounts for aid and grants the Arabs give to other poor Islamic countries.

But, it is not just the poverty of South Asia that gives it an important place in the north-south relationship. Its level of technology, administrative skills and the growing modernization of its societies place South Asia as the most advanced area in the third world (minus China). India and, to a much lesser extent, Pakistan, are the principal suppliers of intermediate technology and services to the oil rich gulf. In the belly of India there is a modern France,<sup>1</sup> in the belly of Pakistan there is a potential Belgium. India straddles the north and the south. We are closer to the north so far as our technology and our belief in liberal political institu-

tions are concerned. We are with the south in a common struggle to realize a new economic order.

Because we straddle the developed and developing worlds, we are in a unique position to move in a positive direction this gigantic effort at international welfare that has been set in motion by the energy crisis. It is so easy to say, as indeed the pessimists of the third world do, that much of the hopes which were generated by the event of 1973 have been dashed since. The second round of the north-south dialogue ended on a 'faint and joyless note', remarked a representative of Shah's Iran<sup>2</sup> — an unstinting friend of the north. The recent UNCTAD V in Manila did no better than the previous one in Nairobi on the issue of stabilizing export earnings of the developing countries, and more important, I think, on the question of trade barriers which the north has erected against the exports of the south. It is increased trade and not aid that is the key to development. In 1977 the less developed countries (ldcs) received nearly \$ 300 billion in trade and barely \$ 20 billion in aid.<sup>3</sup> But world trade is shrinking.

What really divides the rich and poor? Is it the inadequacy of the process by which the conflicting aspirations of the two are sought to be reconciled? Or is it the very iniquity of the structure itself? All developing countries participate in the process while denouncing the world economic structure as iniquitous. The belief — a part of it is just patently nonsense — that the north has grown rich by exploiting the richness of the south is deeply held by the third world leaderships, regardless of their political orientations. The Marxist Sekou Toure and the conservative Prince Fahd would say that it was the exploitation of their bauxite, cocoa or oil that brought prosperity to the West. Incidentally, it is this belief that is at the back of the south's persistent demand for an integrated commodity agreement.

Nothing is to be gained by apportioning guilt for one's misery. No major international understanding

1 This is what Fritz Stern felt on his first visit to India. Fritz Stern 'The Giant From Afar. Visions of Europe from Algiers to Tokyo,' *Foreign Affairs*, Vol 56, No. 1, pp 126.

2 Jahangir Amuzegar, 'A Requiem for the North-South Conference', *Ibid*, note 1 p 137.

3 See *Economist*, April 28, 1979.



has ever been achieved by denouncing one side as the guilty one. We all know how the peace of Versailles which held Imperial Germany guilty for the 1914 war, ended. On the other hand, the experiences of the North American and European societies in bringing about welfare point just to the contrary. There the debates on ending inequalities did not first begin by the have-nots raising the abstract moral questions of just and unjust, right and wrong, but by talking of concrete issues within some loose framework.

International welfare too could come about, at least in substantial measure, by participation in this imperfect process rather than by ushering in some 'perfect' structure. Process is everything and the structure is nothing, to rephrase the revisionist, Bernstein, who believed that it was the movement towards the revolution that was everything and that the revolution itself was nothing.

**T**he international economic system has not been so much against the interest of the developing countries as the third world radicals and some incompetent third world leaderships make out. The striking fact that is ignored in this clatter of 'unjust' international system is that the growth rate of developing countries over the past 25 years averaged over three per cent a year which is 50 per cent higher than the rate of growth of developed countries at a comparable period in their development.<sup>4</sup> Or take another index of development, the rate of domestic savings. During the 1960s the developing world averaged 18.4% of GDP, compared with 12.8% in the 1950s — and the 12.4% that today's developed countries managed when they were industrialising fast from 1861-90.<sup>5</sup> The developing countries have surely done better in terms of growth and domestic savings than the developed ones in their stages of industrialization — all this within the Bretton Woods system created by the rich and for the rich. Wealth does trickle down from above, but never as rapidly as the have-nots would like.

<sup>4</sup> Figures given by the World Bank, President Robert McNamara, quoted in *Impact*, No 21, p 2.

<sup>5</sup> See *Economist*, 23-29 June 1979.

But do words like growth, increasing world trade, better economic cooperation now sound as babbles of an incurable optimist who still hopes that the world economy will overcome its present malaise. Perhaps they are. The latest OECD report sees for its 24 members a growth rate of 2% or less (US growth zero, Britain declining) average inflation 10% and 6% of its labour force unemployed.<sup>6</sup> The 1979-80 recession may turn into a slump, perhaps even a crisis of the magnitude of 1929. An eminent Marxist like Immanuel Wallerstein believes that the world economy has entered the contracting phase which may well last until the end of the century and from which it may perhaps never recover.<sup>7</sup>

Then there is no hope, least of all for the developing world. Beggar my neighbour, competitive devaluations, tariff wars, wrecking inflation and such things the world saw in the 1930s might well repeat and all end as it did then. I do not believe this will happen for the simple reason that the political will to prevent this from happening is far greater than it was in 1929. The leaders of seven most advanced nations have met six times since the energy crisis precisely to jointly search for ways to prevent the world's economic disintegration. The malady is surely there but so is the will to cure it.

**F**or the first time in history, global welfare has become a principal concern of the international community. At Paris, in UNCTAD and UN forums, at IMF and World Bank meetings, rich and poor are engaged in a search to bring about a more just redistribution of the world's resources. The race for global equality may well result in more international conflicts and strife, as Robert Tucker in his *Inequality of Nations*<sup>8</sup> warns. Whether this growing interaction between the developed and developing countries will entail con-

<sup>6</sup> Excerpts from the OECD Report for 1980, in *International Herald Tribune*, July 19, 1979.

<sup>7</sup> See, Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World Economy* Cambridge University Press, 1979.

<sup>8</sup> See Robert Tucker, *Inequality of Nations* (New York, Basic Books, 1977).

lict or cooperation will depend on how it will evolve in future.

Mahbub ul Haq likens the north-south debate to major reform movements within national societies, like civil rights, trade unionism or women's liberation. Serious negotiations, Haq adds, only begin 'when each side understands the relevance of the basic concerns that the other side has. And we are probably reaching that stage now'.<sup>9</sup> Influential liberals, both in and outside the governments of the rich north unquestioningly accept the south's right to have an increased share of global wealth. Today, one perceives just the vague glimmerings of the dawn of global consciousness.

**I**t is at this juncture of the evolving north-south partnership that India has an important role to play. Our commitment to western liberal values, our successful experience during the independence movement of fighting for rights by non-violent means and our present level of technology makes us an ideal interlocutor between north and south. Our diplomatic forte always has been the struggle for a goal within and not outside the system. Unlike Russia and China who in their initial revolutionary phases sought to overturn the system (how unsuccessfully), we have always sought to transform the system from within.

Even though the struggle for a new order primarily relates to economic issues, I think it has an implicit normative bias. It is not just an order designed to bring about a better redistribution of the world's resources, but an order that aspires for a humane political order within countries. Equality is surely the explicit goal of the new order, but that order, as many in the third world and the first world know, can neither be stable nor just without the acceptance of liberal values by the third world autocracies. Shah's Iran may well have been an ideal southern partner of the north, but that partnership was from the beginning shaky. Brazil or South Korea may well be seen by the north as 'moderates' in the ranks of the south, but between

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Mahbub ul Haq, 'A North-South Dialog' *Impact*, No 25, p 41.



them there is a clash of values that periodically upsets their relationships. And could Idi Amin's demand for a new order have been ever seriously entertained by the northern democracies? In this sense, India not only embodies the liberal aspirations of the West, however reluctantly pursued, but also embodies the aspirations of many in the third world who would like to see their countries democratize.

The role that we can assume in the north-south dialogue will to a very large extent depend on the quality of leadership, but also on our ability to shield as much as possible the north-south relationship from the meanderings of the east-west relationship. To talk of the quality of leadership when most unethical cabals are formed to come to power is plainly naive. But to live here one must have a naive faith in our democratic tradition.

The foremost author of non-alignment, Nehru, clearly maintained that the north-south relationship was distinct from the east-west relationship. Even after the 1962 Indo-China border war, and when pressure on Nehru to choose between the east and the west was great, he still maintained that the central issue of world politics was the immense gap between the haves and the have nots. While profiting from the Soviet-American rivalry in the fifties, India along with other practitioners of non-alignment sought to focus the north-south tensions as the real issue of world politics.

Today, the non-aligned movement has grown from 26 who were present at the first non-aligned summit in Belgrade in 1961 to some 96 who recently assembled at Havana. Not only the dilution but even the distortion of the main tenets of non-alignment is the price the movement has paid for becoming so large. Thus, at Havana the movement was really split along east-west lines. Cuba, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and others vigorously sought to rally the non-aligned nations to the side of the Soviet Union. Some echoed the opening statement of Castro that the socialist countries were the 'natural friends' of the non-aligned. The founding members of the movement, not-

ably Yugoslavia and India, sought to rescue the movement from being split along east-west lines. Throughout the deliberations, the most important issue of restructuring a new economic order found expression in a rather vague declaration that called upon the oil rich members of the non-aligned movement to generously assist the poorer members.

The task for the new government that will be installed here in January should still be to carry forward the goal the Janata Government tried to accomplish in its usual slovenly fashion. Genuine non-alignment is indeed more imperative than ever before. The recent Soviet armed intervention is not only a direct thrust of Soviet power in the sub-continent, but is an expression of the general Soviet assertiveness in the third world. There are some estimated 41,000 military personnel and 37,000 technical experts from the Soviet Union, East Europe and Cuba in Africa. The east-west competition in the third world may become keener and with it the focus may well shift away from the north-south relationship.

A re-affirmation of genuine non-alignment will enable us to not only moderate the east-west competition around us (for example in Indo-China) but in the sub-continent. For instance, friendly India-China relations is a greater hedge against China supporting Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan against us than the strained India-China relations which only draws China closer to some of our unfriendly neighbours. Or, again, a non-alignment with a Soviet slant that the opponents of genuine non-alignment would like to see pursued will only reinforce China's and America's ties with Pakistan, particularly in the light of the recent events in Afghanistan. Good neighbourliness is the natural corollary of friendly relations with all the great powers. Our real security only lies in building a more cooperative sub-continent that has a third of the world's population. Drawing Nepal and Bangladesh into an agreement on harnessing of the eastern rivers will prove far more rewarding than pursuing the dangerous idea put forward by some of dominating the sub-continent with Soviet support.



# China and us

S GOPAL

DURING thirty years of People's China, despite shifts and somersaults in domestic affairs, there has been a broad continuity in foreign policy. Reversals of alliances and changes of partners have not meant an alteration of objectives. From the start the leaders of China made it clear that what they sought was the assertion of China's equality among the nations and the strengthening of her security. The Communist Party is in power and is willing to use its doctrine in the service of its diplomacy, but — except for the short period when Lin Piao exercised authority — it has never allowed its ideology to deflect its purpose. Even Lin Piao's theory of the countryside overwhelming the metropolitan areas can be depicted as an effort to secure for China the support of revolutionary forces in the world. But otherwise Chinese foreign policy has moved steadily forward and on a broad keel. It is a nationalist policy, resentful of the 'unequal treaties' and the humiliations inflicted by the West, anxious to restore the boundaries claimed (with or without justification) in the past and prepared, in the process of establishing China as a great power, to discard old friends when the time is ripe and

to forget long-standing enmities at opportune moments.

There is nothing startling in such behaviour, indeed, all countries behave and, one may say, should behave in such a way. It would be foolish not to allow national interests to determine foreign policy, and national interests are independent of ideologies and changes of government. If anyone did expect communist governments to function differently, the example of the Soviet Union was enough to destroy the illusion. But the changes of tactics in Chinese policy always seems to cause surprise and dismay. What was unexpected was not that the Sino-Soviet alliance broke up but that it lasted so long. The amity between China and the United States should have naturally come much sooner than it did; it was delayed by local factors in the United States and enabled Kissinger to claim credit for brilliance of innovation when in fact he merely allowed diplomatic water to find its level.

On this score, Nehru certainly cannot be faulted. When the Communists came to power, he recognised the facts of life and did not allow his friendship with the Chiangs



to shadow his responsibility for India's interests. He contended that People's China should be given her due place in the world not because of any sentimental blindness but as an obvious measure dictated by commonsense. His friendship for China was motivated internally by the desire to give emphasis to economic development rather than to defence, and externally by the hope that if China were not treated as an outlaw but welcomed into the world there would be a better chance for differences between the Soviet Union and China to develop. The latter certainly happened, but this in itself damaged relations between India and China. The Khrushchev policy of cultivating India and other countries of the third world led to China treating India as hostile and utilising the border problem which could easily have been settled by negotiation, in order to humiliate India and demonstrating to the world that it did not always pay to rely on Soviet friendship. Any doubts about this analysis have been removed by recent Chinese action in Vietnam, where the intentions have been proclaimed to be the same, although the results have been less spectacular.

**W**hat does this portend for the long-term view of relations between India and China? This is indisputably a question vital to us for, while India does not loom large in the Chinese picture of the world, China is of crucial significance to us. China believes that she has entered the league of the world powers and is concerned only with the United States and the Soviet Union, what is more important, the United States and the western countries, for reasons of their own, accept China at her own estimate. Whether it be present growth or potential development, India holds her own with China, but India has a worse coverage in the world press. To a considerable extent this is a defect of our virtue, the drawback of an open society, and it enables the western press to denigrate India and glamourise China in a way which, even if incidentally, suits the foreign offices of those countries.

It has to be accepted that we know very little of what is going on within China; even those living in China,

if they are foreigners, are in darkness as regards the society in which they move. There is not even dissident opinion such as lifts the veil in the Soviet Union and the East European countries, there are no Solzhenitzyns and Mandelstams in China. The occasional wall-poster suggests the stirrings of criticism and no one doubts that there are large numbers of political prisoners. But basically the outside world's knowledge of China consists of varying shades of ignorance. So conclusions can be drawn on the basis of large prejudices and little information, and in recent weeks we have seen one western journalist speak of communes as mini-paradises, while another believes that European habits are corrupting communist purity, and in 1993 it will not be China which takes over Hong Kong but Hong Kong which will take over China. In fact, neither opinion is more than conjecture, for China is today the most impenetrable of all the closed societies.

**S**o all analysis has to start from the basis that Chinese foreign policy is continuous and understandable and appears to be influenced little by domestic developments of which we know little, and China, while she conducts herself as a super power, is at the moment no better placed than India. We should not allow ourselves to be mesmerised by China's claims or the extravagant acceptance by the West of those claims. India is as important to China as China is to India, and it is our failure in recent years to act on this premise that has enabled China to work on the basis that we matter little. Moreover, in India too, as in the rest of the world, assessments of China are wholly subjective and reflect the political and ideological commitments of the persons concerned rather than even the glimmerings of reality. In India as elsewhere the beauty or ugliness of China lies in the eye of the beholder.

If such total dependence on preconceptions can be explained by the extreme paucity of information about trends within China, there can be no justification for emotional attitudes about China's clear-cut and manifest approaches to problems of foreign policy. The deficiencies in the im-

plementation of Nehru's policy, leading to disaster and humiliation, cannot deflect from the necessity of emulating his clear-sightedness. The loose talk widely prevalent in India of the opportunities for improving relations with China is not a testimonial to sentiment but a reflection on intelligence. This is not to doubt the benefits which would accrue to us, to Asia and to the world if even a semblance of the past friendship with China were restored. But how is this to be done?

The gestures which China makes on occasions, partly because they are empty and cost her nothing, partly because she believed that Mr. Desai's government was less partial to the Soviet Union than its predecessor, and partly because of suggestions from the United States, cannot conceal the lack of any basic change in Chinese foreign policy. Indian opinion will have to reckon with the fact that nothing short of a major war will lead China to relinquish any major part of the territory in Aksai Chin which she has occupied. Indeed, it is a fair guess that since 1962 she has developed the communications in that area and integrated them into the network of the Chinese system. Vajpayee did well, of course, in stressing during his visit to China that the border issue was not closed so far as India was concerned and that this was the main hurdle in the way of normal relations. But the Chinese government not surprisingly promised nothing. For the Chinese have taken what they wanted and there is nothing that India can now offer them either in this matter or on general world issues. Unlike in the fifties, the support of India is of no value in world affairs. Once the United States recognised reality, the non-aligned countries have become irrelevant to China. She utilizes them, of course, but they have no purchase on her.

**C**learly, therefore, so far as one can foresee, China will accept a settlement of the border problem only if it implies an acceptance by India of the present position. It is only, in the Chinese phrase, 'stabilization' of the border situation which would secure the consent of the Chinese government, and even that is not essential to them. But if the Indian government



offered this to them as part of the process of normalisation and as the outcome of negotiations, they would no doubt give the nod, and in return agree to the repetition of pious and high sounding phrases and to a few minor concessions in trade and communications. No significant expansion of commerce between the two countries can be expected, for China's economy is now geared to purchase of machinery and commodities from the United States, Western Europe and Japan, and there is no great hope of a free and full flow of tourists and others between the two countries. Tibet will certainly remain closed indefinitely to India. Any thought of Indians proceeding in our time as pilgrims to Manasarovar can be dismissed as a mirage.

What all this boils down to is that India can hope to gain almost nothing by 'improving' relations with China. Our territory will not be restored to us, at the most there may be very slight adjustments of the present line of control. In other spheres, the gains will be minimal. On the other hand, any formalisation of the present position can only be to China's advantage and at the further cost of India's already damaged pride and honour. It will mean our own signature to our humiliation and a weakening of our friendship with the Soviet Union. It is possible, and perhaps even necessary, to ensure that we are not over-dependent on Soviet Russia, but there are other ways of doing this than by fawning on China. It is to our best interest to maintain the present situation of 'not peace, not war'. We need not threaten war to regain lost territory, nor need we write it off. We should watch and see whether China will slacken her ties with Pakistan or dilute her support to the hostiles among the tribes in north-eastern India. If she does make moves in these directions as a token of good intent to India, we could consider taking the initiative in offering to promote trade and exchanges of personnel. But, at the moment, China's overall foreign policy does not offer hope of any such moves to placate India. So it is best for us to exercise patience and wait rather than weaken our positions by hurried and unthinking overturns. It is not necessary in foreign policy to be always either a hawk or a dove.

# From illusion to reality

SYED SHAHABUDDIN

SOUTH East Asia has not yet been discovered by India not even by the Janata government. India shall truly discover South East Asia when she learns not to treat South East Asia as an extension of India in space, time or spirit but to respect its personality as a region and to give weight and support to its efforts to find a place for itself in the council of nations as an independent factor.

South East Asia is in a flux and passing through a critical stage in its quest for identity. To achieve an identity with a stable and balanced personality, devoid of any trace of schizophrenia, it must learn to live with itself, with the political, economic and social disparities and ethnic and linguistic differences that span this mosaic of cultures, languages, religions, races, ideologies and historical memories from the borders of India to the borders of China. South East Asia cannot afford a permanent division into hostile camps, a never-ending confrontation within itself generated either by internal cleavages and frictions or by external influences or machinations, if it is to find its soul.

A beginning has been made in this direction through the Asean which has displayed a new vitality and dynamism since the Bali summit and achieved substantial and measurable success in promoting a sense of common destiny among member States and their peoples. It has



opened new vistas for economic co-operation among them, specially in trade through a preferential arrangement and in industry through complementarity as well as joint projects and, finally, in redefining the terms of economic interaction with its major partners in trade, aid, investment or technology. Through an elaborate system of consultations, it has not only taken the edge off many irritating problems among its members, but has also created an environment highly propitious for cooperation among them on all bilateral, multilateral and international questions.

In international forums the Asean States speak with one voice, often through a common spokesman. Through bilateral dialogue with the USA, Japan and the EEC, they have pursued the economic objectives of the third world articulated in the UNCTAD or at the Paris Talks but with special reference to its own needs. Despite its questionable parentage, its slow progress on many fronts and its essentially capitalist and pro-West orientation, the Asean has become a fact of life, a living force to reckon with and a factor which must be taken into account in any approach towards South East Asia.

The Asean has come a long way from the time when it was sneered at. Now it is being wooed. Then it was dubbed as the other face of the SEATO or as the SEATO reincarnate. Now it is heralded as the nucleus of a legitimate and viable regional order. There was a time when no one had a good word for it. Now the whole world, including India, wishes to 'establish a dialogue'. And it is now the turn of the Asean to play the coy but shrewd maiden, leading a row of suitors on a string.

The Asean has not yet achieved maturity or perfection. It is still growing. It has not yet gotten over the complexes of yester year. It suffers from internal contradictions and the most glaring contradiction that it must resolve lies in its relationship with the rest of South East Asia—Burma and the Indo-Chinese States. The Asean shall come of age when, true to its charter and faithful to its regional ethos, it comes to re-

present the whole of South East Asia. But even today an integrated policy towards South East Asia can be meaningful only when it takes the Asean into account, as distinct from the Asean States.

Will the Asean succeed in evolving into a truly South East Asian association? Will it shed its narrow outlook? Will it resolve the contradiction between the public posture of regionalism and the private hesitation against enlarging it, lest it become unmanageable, unwieldy and what is worse, too politicised to be effective and efficacious as an instrument of regional integration or negotiation with outsiders? Since 1975, the Asean faces the dilemma: should it or should it not open its doors to Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea and Burma, though for the record they stand invited. There have been ups and downs in the relation between the Asean and non-Asean States in South East Asia and the immediate future is overshadowed by uncertainties but if the region is to enjoy peace and develop, the only way is peaceful coexistence and regional resilience.

There is no inherent reason why the nation States in the region, each engaged in its own experiment in nation building, must seek fulfillment in hostility or confrontation. They cannot but perceive in the long run that their strength and their capacity to transform the life of their people lie in strengthening their bargaining position so that the raw material they supply to the industrialised countries gives them a fair return in keeping with inflationary trends, so that they have access to additional resources for development in the form of bilateral or institutional credit on reasonable terms, so that transfer of technology and even private foreign investment are possible on acceptable terms without creating pockets of dependence.

They have a common interest in avoiding involvement in global confrontations and in maintaining an international climate conducive to the development process. Can't the States of the region, whatever the ideology of the ruling elite, work together to achieve these common

goals and evolve a regional framework primarily designed to bring pressure to bear on outside powers into harmonising their interests with the common interests and aspirations of South East Asia as a region?

The main obstacles in achieving regional understanding is the legacy of distrust and fear largely the result of past conflicts in most of which the peoples of the region were no more than pawns, at least since the colonial era began. This legacy can be shed only through frank dialogue and expanding cooperation, through fabricating a web of mutually beneficial and reciprocal interests and dependence.

Unfortunately the global powers whose vital interests may clash may not always be inclined to play the game, even if the South East Asian States were to lay down the rules, or voluntarily restrain themselves from cashing in on an opening if mutual fear and distrust persist or re-emerge or if an adversary makes a false move. In the long term, neutralisation with international guarantees and a common policy of equidistance with all great powers appear to be the key to an enduring arrangement.

Today, of all the great powers, China alone, with its shadow falling across a long common border, sees South East Asia as its legitimate sphere of influence and while abjuring and denouncing hegemony, in fact aspires to a position of predominance to fill up the vacuum created by the withdrawal of the USA's physical presence. Its motivation may be pre-emption lest the USSR, through local allies, steals a march. The vibrant nationalism of Vietnam with its revolutionary elan and the euphoria of victory over the strongest military machine known to history, stands as the major hurdle in its path. Malay nationalism provides the second line of defence, supported by Burman or Thai nationalisms. But the latter, always capable of compromises, may line up with China if they see the Chinese wave sweeping over the region. The Asean States should therefore see Vietnam as the bull-work against Chinese expansionism and rejoice if it acquires viability and strength. Despite its



preoccupation with national reconstruction, despite the war-weariness of its people, despite the limited resources it commanded, it stood up to China on the question of the Hua people, when the Chinese attitude sent a shiver down the spine of the other States in the region with a Chinese population

When Vietnam came to the conclusion that it could not afford to live with a hostile Kampuchea, bent on mischief and inspired and maintained by China, it undertook a bold and neat surgical operation. And when the Chinese retaliated with naked aggression, Vietnam gave it back to them. Vietnam's cost calculation was clear, a slow blood-letting and a simmering border dispute which would engage the energies of the nation and slow down the tempo of development would be costlier in the long run. But if the Asean States are not to misunderstand this as a symptom of military resurgence, as a change of national priorities or as a threat to the security of Thailand or any other Asean State, Vietnam must withdraw its forces from Kampuchea, the sooner the better.

**E**ven on the economic front, Vietnam's accession to the Comecon should be seen as the consequence of Vietnam's failure to secure much needed assistance from the USA, Japan or the EEC. The real test of Vietnamese intentions — once its flank is reasonably protected — would be its non-involvement in any military alliance system, its fidelity to the principles of non-alignment, its efforts to build up economic and technical cooperation with the Asean States and its attitude towards direct contacts between Laos and Kampuchea on the one hand and the Asean States on the other. No doubt the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea and particularly its continued presence therein have delayed the forces of reconciliation between the two halves of South East Asia. But once Vietnam withdraws its forces, the long term repercussions may well ripple out primarily because of the inhuman character of the Pol Pot regime, which was but an experiment in calculated brutality and, partly, because the Asean States may understand the underlying geopolitical compulsions of Vietnam and app-

reciate the double standards and the real motives of those who speak of human rights and yet extend support to the Pol Pot regime.

While dealing correctly and fairly with China, the Asean States must keep in mind that the real enemy is China and that if Vietnam succumbs to Chinese pressures, nothing can prevent the establishment of Pax Sinica over South East Asia, given the present convergence of interest between the USA, Japan and China, both in its political and economic dimension which is likely in the foreseeable future.

**T**he USSR must learn to act with restraint. It has limited interest in the region and it should not try to enlist South East Asia in its conflict with China. So long as there is no discrimination against the USSR in developing normal State-to-State relations, be it trade or shipping, and so long as the States in the region refuse to fall into the Chinese net, it has nothing to complain about. Too close an embrace with any State in the region would not only alienate the rest and revive their suspicions but provoke China and encourage the USA to reach out in the region or elsewhere, to correct the strategic balance and the global equilibrium.

The USA and Japan have vital economic interests in the region. While the States in the region may well try to diversify the sources of supply for their inputs and the markets for their products, the pre-eminence of Japan and the USA would continue. If the economic interests are not jeopardised, Japan may abjure a military role and the USA may reach an understanding with the USSR in the spirit of detente, so that the region is left outside the rival systems of global alliances and permitted to develop its full economic potential.

While this scenario may be feasible, can violent internal upheavals be prevented? The region has a history of ethnic and ideological insurgencies and even if great powers (including China in particular) act with restraint, even minor powers may stoke the fire through limited support. The South East Asian

society suffers from inbuilt injustice — political, economic and social, ethnic as well as regional and not all can be corrected by or through the existing power structures. An optimistic scenario would be for the nation-States to restructure themselves, to ensure, in course of time, a higher degree of political democracy, social equality and economic justice, achieved without violence or bloodshed, through national consensus for change, so long as they can be insulated against large scale external support to local insurgencies. Whether the resultant societies shall fit the capitalist or the socialist mould or develop their own unique solution to the grim problem of mass poverty (compounded by population explosion), low productivity, inadequate technology and unjust distribution cannot be foretold. But, whether South East Asia turns capitalist or socialist, the imperatives which determine its geopolitical and economic role in the world will not change.

It is in this context that India has to carve a role for itself in South East Asia and determine its policy towards this region and spell out a programme of mutually beneficial cooperation, not on the basis of some self-satisfying myths but the hard facts of international interaction. India has emerged as a regional power in South Asia, a region which is geographically and historically distinct from South East Asia, but it continues to have a low profile in this neighbouring region and very limited capacity to influence the course of events there. But notwithstanding these limitations and other restraining factors, India also has some in-built advantages in dealing with the region.

**E**ver since independence, while we adopted a posture of equidistance from the great powers and the policy of non-alignment, South East Asia, although part of it was still struggling against colonial domination, appeared to be aligned with the West beyond the point of self-respect. Secondly, we ourselves were anxious to join the big league and play a role on the world stage, we had little time for our small neighbours. From time to time, our leaders and



servants spoke of Asian unity, of developing an Asian personality but the hollow homage having been paid, we returned to our normal orbit which was and is Euro-centred. Intellectually and technologically, we were children of Europe and even economically and culturally we depended on them. Very little of our trade was with our neighbours and even when we bought any of their products, we bought them through London, New York or Amsterdam. We had hardly any visitors from South East Asia and given an opportunity we preferred to visit Europe and the USA. In modern times, thus, there has hardly been any cultural or economic interaction with South East Asia. Finally, while we were too involved in the affairs of the sub-continent, in dealing with the aftermath of partition, South East Asia also was like a boiling cauldron and a cockpit of rivalries.

Only since 1971, and particularly after 1975, have objective conditions arisen which would tend to turn India and South East Asia towards each other. We have shed the ambition of playing the conscience keeper of the world or the moral arbiter of its destiny. We have come down from the clouds and descended on solid earth. We can look around, recognise old friends and neighbours and develop contacts with them. In our immediate neighbourhood we have achieved a benign primacy and the state of affairs is stable enough to be manageable. Our industrial and technological progress has been notable. We have some resources to invest abroad and some intermediate and capital goods to exchange for raw materials. We are thus in a position to develop normal relations with all States in South East Asia without exciting suspicion or reprisal.

**B**ut, being a nation of philosophers, we seek to fit normal intercourse among nations within a philosophical framework, in this instance of pan-Asianism. We must realise that an Asian order of a pan-continental dimension is simply impossible to achieve and impracticable. The Arabs have their own identity. The northern part of the continent which forms part of the USSR plays no rôle in Asian affairs, it is in a

state of suspended animation or liberation, as if the clock of history had stopped ticking. What will happen when it wakes up is anyone's guess but for the present it is not an active factor.

China is a world by itself, Japan content to be an economic giant, full of memories of its abortive experiment in fashioning a co-prosperity sphere. South Asia shows promise of developing the sinews of inter-dependence and South East Asia has similar stirrings. Asia is too vast, too heterogeneous and only on the solid foundation of these beginnings can some day the edifice of Asian unity be designed and constructed. When it comes into being, it shall be a three-tiered structure of magnificent splendour — of nation-States, of regional groupings and of continental cooperation.

But this vision should not cloud our judgment of contemporary realities. For the present, we should resist the temptation of becoming a vocal champion of Asian unity or of proclaiming ourselves as part of South East Asia. Such effusive identification would sow suspicion and unease in the minds of our South East Asian neighbours, give rise to mental reservations and thus increase the psychological distance. Any public or private affirmation by our leadership that India is part of South East Asia or desires admission to a South East Asian grouping is liable to be interpreted as a belated bid for Asian leadership and as an attempt to exploit South East Asia for our own purposes — political and economic.

**W**hat is the image of India in South East Asia? Our nuclear explosion and satellite, symbols of technological breakthrough, have not resolved the problem of poverty. Our commitment to democracy is half-hearted — the right to vote does not bestow a right to food. Our experiment in socialism is a camouflage. With decades of planning, per capita availability of essential goods for the common man has gone down, social and economic disparities have increased, unemployment has risen and become academic. Indian leadership has lacked capacity for hard decisions and the single-

mindedness to implement them. By South East Asian standards, India is a soft State, a nation of theorists, dreamers and hypocrites.

Granted the size of our problems, granted the variety and the vast scale of our experiment in social and economic reconstruction, granted that we take our own decisions, an average South East Asian finds little to emulate in the Indian scene. We have neither a gospel nor offer a prescription for the ills of the region. The fact is that our very size is against us as we are a giant in area and population compared to the South East Asian States, with the exception of Indonesia (whose population is one fifth ours) and we have to be kept at arm's length.

**O**ur emphasis on cultural affinity is also self-defeating. This cultural factor is overrated by us. Whatever the history of cultural interaction between the Indian sub-continent and South East Asia, it would be an exaggeration to maintain, as the trumpeters of Greater India do, that the culture of South East Asia is derived from India. Such a claim, oft repeated which the South-East Asian elite never publicly endorse, only convicts us in their eyes of nurturing a superiority complex and of cultural imperialism. It is also galling to their national pride or regional consciousness. All we can legitimately say is that we share common cultural traditions, that our ideas and our way of life and theirs bear a family resemblance, that we understand each other and that we react alike in a given situation. In any case, the past is past and today our cultural goods have no buyers in this part of the world, so pervasive and deep is the influence of western culture all over.

On the geo-political plane, we have an advantage if we can erase the impression that we support the USSR's interests and aspirations in the region. The South East Asian States may not proclaim it from their house tops but they are all afraid of China and distrustful of its ambitions. In order to keep China at bay and yet in good humour, they must resist the Russian strategy of locking China in a pincer. They do not fear us — which can be an advantage in some situations and we can be regar-



ded as a long term collaborator in resisting Chinese expansionism

The ethnic factor is also a disadvantage but not so great as in the case of China. We should not look upon South East Asia with a relatively low population density and overall food surplus as a legitimate dumping ground for our surplus population. As it is, by acquiescing in unilateral repatriation of ethnic Indians from Burma, forced out with xenophobic violence, we have already set a damaging precedent. It would be out of place here to discuss the various aspects of our policy towards persons of Indian origin overseas. It should suffice for our purposes to ensure that ethnic Indians do not come to be regarded like the Chinese as Trojan horses, that we do not spend on them an unduly large share of the modest resources we devote to promotion of our ties with the region and that we do not use them in any institutional manner for funnelling development resources into India. In the long run, the ethnic Indians, to make a brutally frank statement, are expendable in the larger interest of India's relations with South East Asia.

In our relations with South East Asia, one more factor is beginning to loom large — the Islamic factor. A majority of the people of South East Asia profess Islam and over a period of time, we have to learn to use our own Muslims — the second biggest community in the world within the confines of a single nation-State — as an asset in dealing with our neighbours to the East and to the West. The wave of fundamentalism, sweeping across the world of Islam, has its origin in the humiliation experienced during the era of western dominance, and in the consciousness of technological backwardness. Both these sentiments are capable of being harnessed in the task of nation-building and this put to good use but they can also retain national integration and be exploited for subversion fuelled by petro-dollars. Nevertheless, in the South-East Asian context, a contented and well treated Muslim minority in India can act as a bridge of goodwill.

One more factor needs to be mentioned. So long as we do not banish

English (and thus cut our nose to spite our former masters) and deliberately restrict our access to the modern currents of knowledge and technology, we have an advantage in dealing with South East Asia whose elite are largely proficient in English.

In building new bridges of understanding and trust, the economic factor appears to be the most promising. That we seek trade — raw materials for our growing industries and markets for our surplus goods — is not something we need be ashamed of. But when we try to penetrate the third world market in the name of 'collective self-reliance' or under the label of 'appropriate technology' or by emphasising the interest of the buyer, we end up by arousing suspicion and distrust. This 'oversell' should be abandoned.

We may point out the growing economic inter-dependence of a shrinking world, the world wide spread of new technology, no longer the monopoly of the Europeans, our capacity for original design, our sophistication with low cost, our adaptation of borrowed technology to our own conditions and requirements and the relevance of this experiment to other developing countries facing similar problems. But our commitment to *gobar* gas will not take us very far! And we should not try to palm off to naive neighbours second hand or first generation technology which we ourselves are in the process of discarding. We would be found out and lose credibility.

Secondly, trade is a two-way traffic and international division of labour is dynamic. In the long run, unless we discard the model of economic autarchy that has fascinated our economic planners and bound us to the impossible goal of self-sufficiency in all respects, there would be little room for developing trade. We should be prepared to make such concessions to our neighbours as we demand from the more advanced as a matter of right. There is no longer a neat line dividing the developed and the underdeveloped. It has been replaced by a continuum representing various degrees of development. We have therefore to adopt a flexible regime which would permit the entry

of semi-manufactured and manufactured goods of South East Asian origin into India.

On the industrial plane, our joint ventures should become instruments for real transfer of capital and technology and not remain a cover for the export of capital goods in over supply or in diminishing demand within India. They should be closely integrated with the development objectives and priorities of the host State and, above all, they should bring about collaboration with the sons of the soil and not just with local Indians.

Only such participation in the industrial development of South East Asia can help us in the long run and establish our credentials as an industrial power and as a friend. We have also to guard against identification with one side or the other in local politics and be prepared to transfer content and ownership progressively to local hands. Our executives and technocrats must take pains to avoid building the image of the ugly Indian while they are there. Apart from industrial collaboration, vast opportunities are available for participation in the construction of economic infra-structure, and for cooperation in science and technology applied to development. Such cooperation may entail commitment of considerable resources but this can be fruitful investment in the long run.

In defining a programme of action, we have first to assess our capacity in relation to our long term objectives and take stock of our assets and liabilities in relation to this region. Our long term objective cannot but be the containment of China which can be effected only through the emergence of a strong, united, viable, prosperous and confident South East Asia, at peace with itself and with the rest of the world, with a regional personality which respects the individuality of its diverse peoples and harmonises their legitimate aspirations within a larger framework of common destiny capable of resisting external pressures. Our second objective would be to achieve access to the natural resources and growing markets of South East Asia, on the same terms as their other economic partners enjoy.



The first implies that we should encourage a *modus vivendi* and peaceful coexistence within the region and support any initiative towards building a regional order. While supporting the Asean and seeking a dialogue with it (our policy makers would do well to ponder over the slow and hesitant response of the Asean to our initiative in this regard), we should encourage it to evolve itself into a representative South East Asian institution and make it quite clear in unmistakable terms that we ourselves do not seek admission or entry through the backdoor. We should deal with all States in the region without any preconceived notions and speak to them without any moralistic overtones. We should not lecture them on the merits of our democracy or of our brand of socialism or on the true interpretation of the gospel of non-alignment. Since we cannot defend them against China, we should leave them to deal with the menace as best they can. We should resist the temptation of trying to cast South East Asia in our likeness (the Americans tried and failed) and leave it to evolve its own life and style of government.

**W**e should, of course, use our good offices in reducing the level of mutual distrust between the Asean and non-Asean States and our influence in restraining each side from taking irrevocable steps. We should not get involved in the dynamics of internal change within nation-States but should identify and build linkages which would stand the test of political or social upheavals. Through exchange of visits by decision makers, functional experts, intellectuals and academicians, we should let the elite of India and South East Asia get to know each other, and develop an instinctive feel for each other's susceptibilities and motivations and thus acquire a capacity to anticipate likely reactions at the first encounter.

It is a sad and regrettable fact that while a new South East Asian policy began to take shape in 1976, neither the Prime Minister nor the Foreign Minister have been able to visit South East Asia, two and a half years after the new government came to power. In fact, the first visit by an Indian cabinet minister (by Com-

merce Minister Dharia) came nearly a year and a half later. It cannot fail to register on our neighbours that, while we pay lip service to Asian solidarity, we are — like they are — still Euro-centred. Apart from visits, we have to invest resources in studying the languages and cultures of South East Asia in a planned manner.

**I**ndia today has little relevance for South East Asia but the situation is not static. It shall grow in direct proportion to our political stability, our economic development, our technological autonomy and our demonstrated capacity for peaceful and mutually beneficial coexistence with our immediate neighbours in South Asia. Slogans of Asian unity or cultural affinity will not help us and will be sneered at as a guise for the quest of leadership or as a USSR-inspired subterfuge against China. We can still achieve a breakthrough in South East Asia, notwithstanding the backlash of false starts but on terms of equality and mutual benefit, of sympathy and understanding and not on the basis of myths and illusions or self-satisfying delusions of glory.

Finally, a word about our diplomacy. Our diplomats who couch their despatches in a language calculated to please and our visitors who mistake words of courtesy for genuine admiration lose sight of the scratches on the South East Asian mind and the blocks in the subterranean labyrinths of their psyche. Active and result-oriented diplomacy is not a matter of opening missions or flying flags or of lavish entertaining. It is a serious business, to be taken in hand with a clear perception of realistic and attainable goals and objectives of promoting understanding and legitimate interests, of intelligently determining the points of mutual benefit and of demarcating with sensitivity the line that separates aggressive, mindless pursuit of short term national advantage from patient construction of strong and shock-proof bridges over which two-way caravans of ideas and goods may safely traverse for ages to come, improving the quality of life and illuminating the environment at both ends, in the common interest of all mankind.



# The necessity of choice

BHABANI SEN GUPTA

IN the making of policy, domestic or foreign, decision-makers are always faced with the stern task of choice when the stakes are high and the turf to straddle is strewn with pitfalls. Governments, like individuals, prefer to avoid hard choices until they are compelled to choose. Hard choices, of course, are not the staple of decision-making though elements of preference enter almost every decision of import, when more than a single option is available. The bulk of foreign affairs transactions is routine, many decisions are ad hoc responses to unanticipated crisis situations, even for the State Department of the United States with its huge paraphernalia of information, research and analyses, as Henry Kissinger has lamented in *White House Years*. Each government, however, faces hard choices in determining foreign policy at critical junctures of its relations with nations. Decisions made on the anvil of choices injects qualitative changes into a nation's relations with the external world.

During the last ten years, India's relationship with the Soviet Union has been fashioned on the anvil of choice. The inevitable *necessity to choose* imparted to Indo-Soviet relationship an in-depth strategic dimension in 1971. India had to *choose* to intervene in the Bangladesh liberation struggle with force, the choice was picked up from among several options. Once the decision was made, it was necessary to forge close cooperation with one great power to neutralise the resistance put up by Pakistan and its international allies to the implementation of the Indian decision. The Indo-Soviet treaty of peace and friendship was born out

of the necessity of choice. The necessity was nationally shared; hence the support the treaty received in 1971 even from quarters that are cool towards the USSR.

When the Janata came to power in March 1977, the regional as well as world ambience looked pleasantly malleable. The Janata government faced no hard foreign policy choices before February 1979. American power had retreated from much of Asia after the debacle in Vietnam; the regrouping of American power in Asia had not begun. China was absorbing the trauma of its transition to the post-Mao era, burying much of Maoism, throwing coy kisses at the capitalist powers. The regional climate was the mellowest since 1947. Unconfronted with hard foreign policy choices, the Janata government was able to somewhat lower two Indian profiles, namely, the big brother profile and the Indo-Soviet friendship profile, while launching its diplomacy of good neighbourliness.

Legitimacy for this policy, which also sought better relations with the United States and China, was drawn from the concept of nonalignment. By lowering the profile of the Indo-Soviet friendship and by trying to 'balance' this friendship with better relations with Washington and Beijing, the Janata government claimed that it was pursuing 'genuine' non-alignment, not the 'tilted' road adopted by the government of Indira Gandhi.

The diplomacy of normalisation or good neighbourliness had, however, a brief career. It lost its momentum early in 1979 when Vietnam inter-



vened in Kampuchea and China invaded Vietnam. The Janata government tried to follow an 'evenhanded' policy: it condemned the Chinese invasion of Vietnam and stood by Hanoi in its conflict with Beijing, at the same time, it refused to recognise the pro-Vietnamese regime in Kampuchea until the Vietnamese troops were withdrawn from that country. A breakthrough in Sino-Indian relations remained unattainable, but the relationship continued to be tepid.

In April came the revolution in Afghanistan. It was not engineered by the Soviet Union. But Moscow adopted the Marxist Afghan regime as soon as its leaders proclaimed their pro-Soviet orientation. The Janata government refused to be drawn into the Afghan transformation. Between April 1978 and August 1979, Janata's foreign policy was distinguished by a dogged determination to stay out of conflicts and controversies, to avoid choices. For the revolutionary pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan there was neither enthusiasm nor disapproval in Delhi. The trial and hanging of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto did not stir the Janata government. It took no public notice of the Afghan insurgency which Pakistan was feeding from the beginning. It neither applauded nor lamented the overthrow of the Shah of Iran. The remarkable revolution of the Ayatollah Khomeini did not ignite passion in South Block. The infighting of Janata leaders and factions consumed the bulk of the government's mind and muscle. None of the events in the neighbourhood confronted it with the necessity of choice.

**T**hen, in the last week of December 1979, the Soviets intervened with massive military force in Afghanistan. Hafizullah Amin, who had installed himself as president of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in September, after deposing Noor Mohammed Tarakki in a coup, was overthrown and executed in less than 24 hours, and Babrak Karmal proclaimed head of State and government. Presiding at the raj in Delhi was a lame-duck prime minister unlettered in international politics and diplomacy, the country was caught in the throes of a bitter, tearing election campaign. This caretaker prime

minister and his ineffectual government were faced not only with the presence of a massive Soviet military presence in Afghanistan but also the immediate US countermove to extend prompt military aid to Pakistan and the Afghan insurgents. Simultaneously, the United States moved to lock-step China to pursue common and parallel action against the USSR, using Pakistan as the principal base of anti-Soviet operations.

**T**he caretaker prime minister was suddenly faced with a necessity of choice which his predecessor could avoid for nearly two-and-a-half years. Still he refused to choose. The first statement issued by this government on December 28, after being officially informed by the Soviet ambassador of the military assistance extended by Moscow to a new Afghan regime, only took note of what had happened, and expressed the hope that 'no country or external power would take steps which might aggravate the situation and that normalcy would be restored there early'. On December 30, by which time the US had decided to rearm Pakistan, the caretaker prime minister sent for the Soviet ambassador and remarked that 'the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan will have far-reaching and adverse consequences for this region and expressed the hope that the Soviet troops would withdraw as soon as possible'.

Charan Singh's observations to the Soviet ambassador contained a veiled disapproval of the Soviet aimed intervention in Afghanistan. He reminded Moscow of the commitment it had made jointly with India in June 1979 that there must be no external intervention in Afghan affairs (in doing this, Charan Singh twisted the meaning of the June communique which meant by external intervention only intervention by Pakistan, Iran, the US and China), and reiterated India's support for Afghanistan's independence and sovereignty. Charan Singh, however, did not question the legality of the Soviet intervention, nor did he urge 'immediate' withdrawal of Soviet forces (as reported by several Indian newspapers).

On January 12, 1980, India's stand on the Afghan crisis changed almost

completely. By this time, Mrs Indira Gandhi had massively won the parliamentary election, but had not formed her government. Nevertheless, she was in charge of crucial decision-making on the Soviet action in Afghanistan. Under her instructions, the Indian envoy at the United Nations, Brajesh Mishra, in a speech that stunned many governments, made the following points: (1) the Soviets sent troops to Afghanistan on December 26 at the request of the Afghan government, (2) while India was against the presence of foreign troops and bases in any country, it had no reason to disbelieve a friendly country like the Soviet Union when it said that it would withdraw troops from Afghanistan when asked to do so by the government in Kabul, (3) India hoped that the Soviet Union would not violate the independence of Afghanistan and would not keep troops in that country a day longer than necessary, (4) India was gravely concerned over the response of the United States, China, Pakistan and others to the Soviet action, the arming and training of Afghan rebels and encouragement given to subversive activities in Afghanistan amounted to external interference in Afghan affairs, building bases, pumping arms to small and medium countries, and expanding naval activities in the Indian Ocean might lead to intensification of the cold war and threaten the peace and security of the region. These activities 'pose a threat even to our own nation'. The Indian envoy was speaking in the debate on a 17-nation resolution urging immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. In the voting on the resolution, which was carried with a two-thirds majority, India abstained.

**T**hus, the inaugural foreign policy action of Mrs Gandhi's Congress-I government was one of clear and incisive choice. In a fresh outbreak of great power rivalries over pieces of real estate in South Asia, Mrs Gandhi chose to remain with the Soviet Union. It was not that no other option was available to her. She could condemn the Soviet intervention and join the United States, China and Pakistan in a concerted



effort to contain Soviet influence from extending to the interlinked geostrategic regions of the Persian Gulf and South Asia

She could plough an independent diplomatic furrow together with like-minded Asian countries to bring pressure simultaneously on the Soviets to withdraw their forces or reduce them substantially and on the United States, China and Pakistan not to use the insurgency as an instrument of interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan

She could fasten Indian diplomacy on persuading Pakistan not to act as a proxy of the US and China but to work with India, Nepal and Bangladesh to protect the independence and integrity of the region and reduce the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan.

She must have weighed each of these options before deciding that India's regional and national interests would be safer if she stayed with a time-tested friend in an ambience of polarisation of the major powers. To be sure, Mrs Gandhi *did not support* the Soviet armed presence in Afghanistan, as she made clear on January 16. But she, (1) made it clear that the Soviets did act on the request of the government existing in Afghanistan prior to the first big airlifts (a point that was made also in *The New York Times* but was kept deliberately ambiguous by the caretaker regime of Charan Singh), (2) trusted the Soviet assurance that the troops would be withdrawn as soon as Afghanistan asked for it, (3) perceived more danger to India's own security in the concerted cold-warish responses of the United States and China to the Soviet action, (4) gave advance notice to Pakistan, China and the rest of the world that any Sino-American move to arm Pakistan and destabilise the region would compel India to renew its time-tested strategic collaboration with the USSR, and (5) by abstaining from voting in the UN General Assembly, kept some distance from Moscow so that India could work patiently — unilaterally or in conjunction with other nations — to ensure at least a sizeable Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan at the earliest possible time.

Foreign diplomats and correspondents in New Delhi were surprised by the *finality* of Mrs Gandhi's decision. Many of them wondered if she had not acted in haste, without adequate information of what had actually happened and was still happening and whether a certain ambivalence on her part would not have induced the Soviets to reduce their involvement in Afghanistan. 'What was the great urgency of siding with the Soviets even before she actually took over as prime minister,' asked an editor of a well-known London weekly 'Even if the moral aspects of the issue were dismissed, why doesn't India understand how the United States, China and Pakistan feel about the Soviet move but only wish that she be understood by these three countries?' was the question of an anguished American reporter

The 'finality' of Mrs Gandhi's choice, however, relates only to the strategic divide in South Asia. The divide is between Pakistan and India. It remains unabridged. It got meshed with the global strategic divide since the early fifties when Pakistan became a cold war ally of the United States. The Pakistan-US military linkage produced the Indo-Soviet non-military linkage in the mid-fifties. The Indo-Soviet linkage acquired military import only after the India-China border war of 1962. Since the 1972 Sino-US diplomatic breakthrough, India has been apprehending the forging of an axis of Pakistan, China and the United States. Even if the axis is formed primarily to contain the Soviet Union, it is perceived by Indians as a threat to India's legitimate stature and interests in South Asia. The Indian image of this kind of an emerging axis produced the Indo-Soviet treaty in August 1971. Any joint Sino-US effort to prop up Pakistan as an operational base against the USSR can only fortify the Indo-Soviet strategic linkage.

By making this quite clear to everyone concerned, Mrs Gandhi has made an immediate contribution to stability in the region. Any ambiguity on her part would have seriously destabilised the strategic relationships which have stood India in good stead in the past and is certain to pay dividends in the future. In no

conceivable circumstance could India line up with Pakistan, China and the United States against the Soviet Union, this would have gone against the grain of India's foreign policy since independence.

Any measured censure of the Soviet action in Afghanistan could only have cost India a valued and tested friendship, without compensation from any other quarter. Isolation would have increased Soviet intransigence, India would have no occasion to influence Moscow's thinking and action as a friend. American arms would have flown to Pakistan in large quantities, the Chinese would have trained the Afghan rebels, the Soviets, with the help of the Afghan government, would have determined to destabilise Pakistan, Pakistan would conduct its nuclear explosion. What would India have gained in such a baroque scenario?

Apart from the probability of compromising its regional stature, to which the Soviets have made no mean contribution in the last 25 years, a strong constraint on Indian collusion with the US and China is the very different perceptions the three countries have of the USSR at the dawn of the 1980s. The United States perceives the Soviet Union as an adversary who, having achieved parity in strategic power (if not superiority), is now trying to achieve parity of influence and power in the extensive seething rear of the capitalist-imperialist system, that is, the third world. The Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan looks in American eyes as yet another awesome assertion of Moscow's interventionist power and will, and, militarily, as a move that has outflanked Iran and stolen from the United States the element of surprise in any military action. America may decide to take in the Gulf region. The Carter administration therefore has taken an entirely geostrategic view of the Soviet move: this has created a scenario in which the global sweep of interests and power of the US and the USSR are locked in combat. The Chinese rulers feel that their own country's security and independence is threatened by expanding Soviet military power, each Soviet success is, in Chinese percep-



tion, one more link in a chain of Soviet encirclement of China.

The rulers of Pakistan see the USSR with Chinese and American lenses, Soviet power, entrenched in Afghanistan, is Soviet power breathing down the neck of Pakistan. The fragility of Pakistan's domestic politics and the simmering political discontent of its minority nationalities make the rulers of that country take a paranoid view of the USSR. Besides, and perhaps more important, the Pakistani rulers see the Soviet Union largely in the context of the India-Pakistan strategic divide, the main frustration of Pakistan's foreign policy is that it has always sought, and never got, a great power ally on whom it could rely at times of distress. It is not easy for the rulers of Pakistan to forgive the USSR for being to India what neither the United States nor China has so far been to Pakistan.

**T**he Indian perception of the USSR is very different. Soviet power has so far not been a threat to India, it has been a source of strength. Soviet economic power has made substantial contribution to India's economic and social development. The global interests of the USSR and the regional interests of India have not clashed, but have more or less converged. Indians believe that they have been able to use Moscow's friendship to advance and defend India's own interests, in other words, they have not paid any price for the friendship under duress.

For India, it will not be a disaster if Soviet influence extends to the Persian Gulf region. The inner strength of the Indian republic enables Indians to take a more detached view of the global rivalry of the two super powers. An American-controlled global balance of power did not prove to be particularly pleasant for India. If the balance tilts towards the Soviet Union, which it has not done as yet, it may not be too unpleasant for India.

This somewhat detached Indian attitude towards the great power divide stems from a number of factors. The two most important factors are India's own self-image and India's nonalignment. Indians look upon their country as a credible can-

didate for major power status, whether the term used is dominant regional power, or primary regional power or whatever. Nonalignment is no longer a creative and potent instrument of diplomacy. But it is a habit with Indians and several other nations, a way of life and thought. It allows a dispassionate view of conflicts between and among the Goliaths of the world. It enables the nonaligned to see international events in the context of their own interests.

India's great frustration with the United States is that in no American schema of the world has there been ever a recognition of India as an independent centre of power. The rigid global division of the cold war period allowed no third power role in the US world view, hence the failure of the United States to accommodate nonalignment within its world-view and global diplomacy. Even when the cold war is no more, and the American foreign policy elite perceive a widespread dispersion or diffusion of power, there is hardly any definitive role for the independent regional dominant powers in current US foreign policy schemas. Indeed, when the two super powers clash, each expects a polarisation to take place among the noncombatants. The US reaction to the Soviet troops movement into Afghanistan was so immediate and pervasive that it foreclosed any role for India to diffuse the crisis with a regional initiative unless whatever initiative India might take would run parallel to, if it did not actually merge with, the US response.

**T**he size and nature of the US response raises serious doubt whether Washington's objective is to persuade the USSR to withdraw the bulk of its troops from Afghanistan or to reconstruct in the major geostrategic regions of Asia military alliance systems that collapsed after the defeat in Vietnam. By enlisting Chinese collaboration in an endeavour of this kind, the United States automatically forecloses the possibility of working with India. The blunt fact is that this is known in Washington where nobody really cares for India's sensibilities and interests.

In the difficult transition from the cold war to stable, peaceful co-exist-

ence, the exclusiveness of international relations has yielded to an inclusiveness, nations no longer reject nations because of ideological differences, but keep windows open to admit all the breezes that amble in the arena of world politics. The forces that have made the world community more interdependent than ever before are *not* much weaker than the forces that divide nations and drive them into conflicts. Moreover, the gross inequalities that characterised even the major actors in the world in the fifties have been largely levelled, the Soviet Union is now a true peer of the United States in military power, while the emergence of West Germany, Japan, France and the EEC as centres of autonomous decision-making has diminished the world stature of America. From these and other developments stem the *trend and process* of normalisation of relations between and among nations, by whatever name the process may be called.

**T**he trend is not equally strong all over the world, détente, for instance, is a more durable plant in Europe than at the summit of the international system. However, if the process of normalisation stands on objective realities, as the Soviets contend they do, then the world cannot return to the cold war but must somehow somewhere stumble into the valley of coexistence, however tortuous may be the road and halting the journey.

One of the principal characteristics of this transitional period in world politics is that for most nations, if not all, there is a *core relationship* which is sought to be kept intact, while the search goes on to build parallel positive relationships. This is true as much of the major powers as of the medium and small ones. Barring a few, nations have not abandoned their respective core relationship in the seventies, but have sought to improve their relations with traditional foes or adversaries. For India, the core relationship has been with the USSR since 1962. There is ample room for India to improve its relations with the United States and China without unduly weakening the core relationship with the USSR.



The ambivalence the Janata government sought to introduce into India's relations with the USSR was possible because India was not caught in the vortex of a regional crisis involving the major world powers. If Mr Morarji Desai were faced with the sombre prospect of a Sino-US alliance propping up Pakistan as an anti-Soviet base, he would have clutched at India's core relationship with the Soviet Union as promptly as has Mrs Gandhi. *The Times of India* which used strong invectives to denounce the Soviet action in Afghanistan, asked in an editorial on January 18 what would be India's position if the Sino-US alliance got 'consolidated'. Do we then have no choice but to depend on the Soviet Union for our security, whatever the risks? Only those Indians who are either blinded by their anti-communism and anti-Sovietism or are utterly careless of the country's defence requirements or are ignorant of what is happening around us can wish to shut their eyes on this possibility.

**B**y choosing to invoke India's core relationship with the Soviet Union in an ambience of a renewed regional conflict, Mrs Gandhi has sought to prevent a consolidation of the Sino-US alliance in this region. It became clear during the New Delhi visit of the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, that neither Britain nor the West European powers wanted to see South Asia polarised between a Sino-US-Pakistan axis and a Soviet-India-Afghanistan axis. The very 'finality' of Mrs Gandhi's choice has had a sobering impact on strategic decision-makers in several capitals. It has opened several channels of diplomatic dialogue — between India and Pakistan, between India and the United States, and between Pakistan and the Soviet Union. The 'finality' of India's decision to stay with the USSR, then, has *not* closed the possibility of a regional initiative. *It has, in fact, opened this possibility.*

The great obstacle to a successful regional initiative is the meshing together by the United States of regional and global aspects of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The US, as noted, sees the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan primarily as

a threat to Iran and the Persian Gulf of which geostategic area Pakistan is, in American view, an integral part. Afghanistan has been a Soviet sphere of influence for some two decades, the US did not stir even when 6,000 Soviet military 'advisers' were operating in Afghanistan. It was the massive Soviet airlift of the last week of December, and the interventionist power and will which it flashed across the 'arc of crisis' (the phrase used by Zbigniew K. Brzezinski to describe what once used to be called the Northern Tier — Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and the Gulf region) which galvanised America's global response to a regional event.

But, it was also the response of a President who is under considerable strain to demonstrate his leadership qualities in an overheated election year; it was also the response of the world's strongest government rendered powerless to rescue 50 American diplomats from the clutches of Ayatollah Khomeini's revolutionary youth. It was the response of a country which was seeking an opportunity to regroup and re-establish its military strength in conjunction with its allies in the strategic regions of the world.

**P**akistan's great dilemma is whether it should seek a regional solution of the crisis or lend itself to be used for the purposes of America's global interests as these are seen to be affected by the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. On Pakistan's ability to resolve this dilemma would depend the chances of a successful regional initiative. Before such an initiative can be forged, it will be necessary to define its objectives. These, in Mrs Gandhi's view, can only be two: (1) to persuade the Soviets to withdraw the bulk of its forces from Afghanistan, and (2) to ensure that Afghanistan's sovereignty and independence is not abridged. These limited objectives can be secured with Soviet cooperation only when (1) the internal war in Afghanistan ends and the Marxist regime is stabilised, and (2) there is no organised attempt to internationalise the Afghan insurgency.

These objectives cannot be secured if Pakistan positions five or ten divi-

sions of its troops along the Afghan border to face seven divisions of Soviet troops on the other side of the border, if Chinese arms flow to the rebels and Chinese forces are seen fighting on their behalf or training them, if the United States goes ahead with its substantial arms transfers to Pakistan, if Zia ul Huq tries to build Pan-Islamic pressures on the Soviet Union instead of working with Indian and other secular nations to diffuse the Afghan crisis.

Mrs Gandhi has made it clear that each of the actions on the part of the US, China and Pakistan mentioned above can only aggravate the crisis. Each of these actions can only strengthen the strategic cooperation of the USSR and India. Their long-term cumulative impact on Pakistan can only be destabilising. The integrity and independence of Pakistan is necessary for India's security, principal threats to it come not from Moscow, but from the internal instabilities and economic stagnation of Pakistan.

**I**n international politics, the trenchant division is not between right and wrong but between the desirable and the attainable. Military intervention always whips up passions, but interventions are part of the staple of real politik. Asia has had to absorb the trauma of more than a dozen western military interventions in the last three decades. The decade of the seventies witnessed a number of Soviet interventions. As in the case of western interventions so in the case of Soviet interventions, the best that can be done is to limit the impact of each intervention and restore normal conditions as quickly and as far as possible. There can be no return to the status quo ante, but the history of world affairs teach us that things do not change as sharply or rapidly or fundamentally as media headlines and political rhetoric claim they do. Henry Kissinger observed in December 1975, 'The problem of our age is how to manage the emergence of the Soviet Union as a global power'. This is exactly what India, in its own way, has been trying to do and it hasn't done a bad job so far, although in the West there is no appreciation of India's style of 'managing' the emerging global power of the Soviet Union.



# Books

THE WIDENING GULF : Asian Nationalism and American Policy by Selig S Harrison. The Free Press, New York, 1978

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WITH Iran torn by religious turmoil, with Soviet soldiers and their tanks, artillery and helicopter gun-

ships swarming over the mountain fastnesses of Afghanistan, with Saudi Arabia's royal family still reeling from the bloody assault on the most sacred shrine of Islam; with Moscow already well ensconced in the Horn of Africa; with Pakistan held together by the fist of the military, with Kremlin-backed hardliners running not only all Vietnam, but also Laos and



making every effort to force Kampuchea under their sway, the time is indeed opportune for a new analysis of American policy in Asia.

Selig Harrison has written an important book, though with some blemishes I only hope that it is read and its lessons appreciated by the foreign policy mandarins in the State Department, by the incumbents of the White House and their friends, by would-be presidents and, not least, by the legislators on Capitol Hill who set the trammels for foreign policy

American policy in Asia has been littered with failures Vietnam most spectacularly, Iran most damagingly since the book was written, Afghanistan through neglect, India too through Henry Kissinger's blind arrogance when clashing with another strong will. Indeed, some of Washington's friends are beginning to wonder if it is a policy with failures or a policy of failure that the United States is pursuing in Asia. Even today with plenty of warnings in the shape of the toppling of thrones and dominations, the great democracy of the US continues to back petty dictators, whose survival is questionable. Every commentator probably has his favourite — or unfavourite — handful.

Selig Harrison's thesis is that 'American policy since World War II has rested on the implicit assumption that nationalism in Asia is a passing phenomenon destined to wane in strength as the colonial past recedes and as modern technology releases ever more powerful "transnational" forces. Zbigniew Brzezinski has been a representative spokesman of this view, contending that in the "technetronic era" of satellite communication and jet aircraft, nationalism remains "a principal object, but no longer the vital subject, of dynamic processes" and is progressively "diluted" as it becomes increasingly anachronistic.'

But such a view of nationalism is a European one, concentrating narrowly on the idea of linguistic and ethnic self-determination. The world facing Asia today is much more complex than that facing the European States fighting for self-determination. In particular Asia has to work out a response to the rich world of Europe and North America. Political colonialism may have retreated, but economic dominance remains.

'Nationalism in Asia, comes as a response to inequities of wealth and power that not only are more severe and more pervasive than those of Europe in earlier centuries but also are reinforced by basic racial divisions. The continuing strength of nationalism in Asia cannot be adequately understood, therefore, solely in terms of the desire to assert linguistic, cultural or ethnic identity as such. The desire goes together with an urge to find political foci of identity and self-respect that can provide relief from inferiority feelings generated by white, Western dominance' he argues.

He reviews American policy across a broad geographical and cultural sweep of countries from Pakistan to Japan and Korea, and finds it wanting. He details the blindness of Washington, the naivety, laughable or tragic, that effectively sought to turn countries like India and Japan into little more than American surrogates.

Even where governments went along, there was a lack of trust which could later be used to overturn or undermine policies. He quotes Hussein Shaheed Suhrawardy that the alliance with Pakistan was negotiated 'as the business of a few ministers sheltered in secrecy. The result has been a set of commitments in the legal sense, yet not sufficiently felt as commitments in the consciousness of the people themselves. The very secrecy with which our engagements have been entered into, the lack of public debate, has left them vulnerable to suspicion that they have somehow rendered us subservient and then drained away our autonomy.'

In making his survey, Selig Harrison combines the best of journalism with academic scholarship. His feel and understanding of the countries of Asia comes from years in the region as a journalist. On top of this he has a sympathy for Asia stemming from the generosity that Americans have frequently shown. And in his command of sources and quotations he shows that scholarship does not need to be dull. Only occasionally does he lapse into the gobbledegook of academe, using five fancy words for one straight English one.

He is at his best with Vietnam, where the case is the most straightforward: the communists grabbed the mantle of nationalism while all others dithered and the Americans showed themselves to be crass indeed in committing themselves to a fight they could never win. He is good in appreciating India's economic nationalism 'a readiness to bear inordinate costs, if necessary, to maximise the independent character of the industrialisation achieved.'

His judgements on South Korea are the most questionable. I think that Selig Harrison underplays the achievements of the Seoul regime, and, strangely, does not give credit to the nationalist Korean economic forces just beginning to show themselves to ensure that capitalist South Korea will not be a puppet of American or Japanese multinational corporations.

He claims that South Korea is a case of 'nationalism neutralised' essentially by the failure of the Communists to cut a nationalist suit as by economic success in the South. He might have given more force to the role of economic development. But in the case of Korea there is a complexity of other forces jostling alongside nationalism: hatred of communism, the role of religion, economic equality of opportunity.

There is a need now to take Selig Harrison's analysis forward. He does not give attention to the influence of the Soviet Union lurking at the door of Asia. What weapons should be used to combat a Moscow which has shown, in Afghanistan as in the Soviet European



and Asian republics, that it is prepared to trample on nationalist and any other feelings. How should Washington and Asian capitals react? — not just surely by hoping and praying that in the fullness of time Moscow will also have to work out its salvation with national feeling.

The American policymaker faces peculiar problems. He has the problems of democracy and regular elections producing the urge for quick results. He has the problems of democracy by which the Representative for Backwoodsville, Alabama, has to show his constituents that the policy will benefit them or he will be out on his ear. He has the problem of how to distinguish the claims of Asian leaders.

In country after country across Asia the leadership, political and business, comes from a narrow elite. In absolute terms such people live hardly much differently from the elite of the West or Communist countries. In relative terms they are emperors of fable compared to their poor people. America (and the Soviet Union) and the multinationals may be to blame for 'oppressing' the people, but so are the elite for throwing slogans rather than helping to release the energies of their people.

So how does the man in the White House choose, assuming he has the luxury of choice, the right man, the good man with whom to work, especially when there may be a man with a gun holding the power?

The tragedy is that the American policymakers have been so often so impressed by the men with guns. The hope is that Selig Harrison has written this book exposing the lack of intellectual content, or even much thought, in American policy and has been applauded at least by the liberal establishment.

The problem remains: the world goes forward and tomorrow's decisions are built on the mistakes of today and yesterday, can better choices now be made with men with guns still in power and with Soviet tanks in independent, non-aligned Asia just over the border.

Kevin Rafferty

**THE WEAK IN THE WORLD OF THE STRONG:**  
**The Developing Countries in the International**  
**System by Robert L. Rothstein. Columbia**  
**University Press, New York, 1977**

SIGNIFICANTLY, there is a new turn in the approach of the rich countries to the question of evolving new patterns and structures of international economic relationships. This is only predictable. The old Bretton-Woods order has collapsed under its own weight. A new order has to fill the vacuum. As the voice of the world's poor is becoming increasingly louder there is a chance, however remote, that the balance of privileges might eventually shift in favour of the weak or at least that some of the present built-in asymmetries might disappear.

The intellectual foundations of this new approach are beginning to be visible in a spate of recent western literature on north-south relations. Robert L. Rothstein's *The Weak in the World of the Strong* is an eminently readable academic exercise in this category, though much of what he says and the conclusions he has derived from his apparently sophisticated analysis are open to question. But its message is clear and it is addressed to the developing countries. 'Set your own house in order before you talk of the international order.'

It is interesting to recall the pattern of response of the rich countries to the idea of a New International Economic Order (NIEO). The 1973 oil crisis, the defiance of OPEC and the third world unity, all had given a fresh impetus to this dormant theme and it soon assumed the form of a demand of the poor countries.

At first the idea of a new world order itself was ridiculed and condemned by the rich countries. For them it was absurd to talk of a new order when there was nothing basically wrong with the old order. Many refused to believe the demise of the Bretton Woods order. Those who believed refused to listen to the call for a new order because it came from the poor countries.

However, the western establishments soon realised that they cannot simply wish away the just demands of the third world. But, then, the response was to meet the alleged 'threat from the third world' by counter-threats and retaliation. The developing countries rightly refused to play into the hands of western hawks and instead adopted a moderate course of pursuing their goal by reason and persuasion.

This gave rise to the need for fresh efforts on the part of the western intellectuals to invent new ideas and arguments to deflect world attention from focusing on the need for a new international order to the more basic need for a new national order and, thus, to turn the table on the poor countries. Stripped of all cosmetic masks, Rothstein's book is one such effort.

His attempt is to establish the link between the domestic order of the developing countries and the external world to prove his point that changes in the external world are not likely to bring about the desired changes in the domestic order unless major socio-economic transformations take place in the latter.

Rothstein makes two points in this connection. First, even if the developed countries make substantial concessions it is not going to benefit all the developing countries equally because of their vastly differing levels of competitiveness in the international system. The richer among the poor would reap the benefits and the poorer will only be worse off. Secondly, under the prevailing conditions, the benefits of deve-



lopment within the poor countries would be cornered, as in the past, by the top few elite groups. The bottom 40 per cent who are below the poverty line would remain where they are. In fact, the income gap within national economies would widen even more. While the first problem can be tackled, according to the author, by resorting to discriminatory policies towards various economic groups within the developing countries, the second problem can be tackled only by a change in the style and outlook of the elites in these countries. He visualises an enlightened elite which will be prepared to share the national cake voluntarily before a new international order could be made meaningful.

No one can seriously dispute the merit of this argument. Nor are the facts the author marshals terribly new. As anyone can see there is an intense debate going on for some years in many of the developing countries on these crucial issues. As mass poverty has begun to eat into the vitals of the political systems in these countries the elites are forced to change their values and perceptions or else they themselves will be changed sooner than later.

But who is responsible for this state of affairs? It is not an academic question and the answer to that is not meant even to apportion blame. The past is a guide to the future. Historical perspectives add new dimensions to the realities of today and new meaning to the future. The decolonisation and political independence did indeed give the choice of economic decisions to the new inexperienced leadership in the third world. They are now being blamed, and rightly so, for seeking the refuge of soft economic options.

But, among the reasons for their reluctance to adopt hard options was the intrinsic hope of genuine support from those abroad who were sworn enemies of such hard options, the ambition to prove the merit of a third path to economic salvation (as distinct from communist and capitalist), the influence of powerful vested interests which existed in these countries with their links abroad, the new development theories which emanated from the modern citadels of wisdom and scholarship such as MIT and Harvard, and so on.

Rothstein finds fault with almost all programmes of economic planning the developing countries had embarked on in the last thirty years. Industrialisation, import substitution, the self-reliance approach were all crimes of the first order. But who gained by the theories of accelerated growth, percolation theory, stages of growth, 'the social utility of greed', etc., which were imposed on the gullible planners in the poor countries who were overawed by the immensity of the problems confronting them but who had immense faith in the scientific vision of their counterparts in the West.

Yet, theoretically it is justified in pointing an accusing finger at the national leaders and planners for messing up their economies almost beyond redemption, even when they had theoretically a choice before them. But was there a real choice? Given the objec-

tive conditions and the character of the ruling class, things would not have been far different in most countries. In shaping those objective conditions, the external world had a major share. It is unfortunate that those who benefitted by the policies of the developing countries in the fifties and sixties (OECD countries marked a phenomenal growth during this period) are now trying to disown their own failures which added to the poor countries' miseries. The rich countries can afford to be more charitable in their attitudes if not more generous in material terms.

That the godfathers in the rich countries failed to grasp the vastly different nature of economic problems the poor countries were faced with is now being widely confessed, as Rothstein himself points out. But a mere confession is not enough. The political fall-out of this failure is conveniently ignored. By accident or design the policies prescribed by the high priests of the West and implemented by their faithfuls in the poor countries resulted in the emergence of another set of powerful vested interests in these countries, which in many instances, even today act as a bulwark against a radical transformation of the socio-political and economic landscape of the third world. It, thus, did serve the interests of rich countries by perpetuating their economic domination and political influence in these countries, and it happened at a point in history when the political awakening in these countries was heralding revolutionary changes. Strategically this is no mean gain to the rich western countries.

The western academicians are fully aware of this and that is why they are now trying to convince the developing countries, as Rothstein does, that their stability and prosperity cannot be independent of those of the developed countries and, therefore, they should give up ideas like 'collective self-reliance' among developing countries which he calls an 'irresponsible' approach.

We may pause for a moment and ask the question why the issue of national order is being brought into the north-south dialogue at this juncture, when the appalling dimensions of it were fully known to the western world for a long time now. However articulated such themes are, it is difficult to accept that they show a genuine concern for the plight of the poor. What other motives can they have? Is it intended to delay and impede progress of the north-south dialogue by adding a seemingly intractable external issue by painting the NIEO demand as a diversionary move by national elites to cover up their own hopelessly miserable performance record? Is it also meant to warn, implicitly though, the elites of the developing countries who articulate the demand that the more they talk about NIEO the more will they be exposed to the extreme needs of the national order and thus destabilise their own position? This is a familiar technique the management resorts to by putting the trade union leaders in their place by threats of blackmail. Since many in the West view the demand for NIEO as a trade union movement at global level, such response is only natural.



We should not be taken in by the bogus concern of the western intellectuals when they admit their guilt and say that the development policies of the fifties and sixties, the sinews of which were the western academic and bureaucratic establishments, have gone haywire. But the truth is revealing. Our ignominious dependence, particularly intellectual dependence, is so strikingly crucial that we now pay the price for it by compromising the welfare of millions of our people. This intellectual slavery, the tendency to thrive on borrowed ideas and refusal to think afresh and originally have reduced us to the status of sheer echoing machines. This may not be a delightful idea for our proud intellectuals to cherish, but now that the indictment has come from the master himself for having echoed his voice obediently, is it not enough to open our eyes? Dependence on other's ideas is the worst kind of dependence the third world is experiencing.

Conscious and massive effort to overcome this dependence should be a major item on the agenda of developing countries if they have to make any headway in the direction of any order — national or international — of any variety — economic, political or social. We have to pick up and develop new talents from among young and promising scholars who can think independently and who are relatively free from the onslaught of western academic imperialism. We have to conceive, develop and articulate in international forums new approaches, new arguments, new ideas and new insights. Without this no amount of economic concessions and not even a greater level of international political participation is going to be enough to salvage the developing countries from the morass into which they have sunk so deeply.

P K S Namboodiri

**THE NONALIGNED MOVEMENT: The Origins of a Third World Alliance** by Peter Willetts. Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1978.

**INDIA, CHINA AND INDO-CHINA: Reflections of a 'Liberated' Diplomat** by T N Kaul. Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1980

The first is one of the few books I know of that attempts to analyse the nonaligned movement taken as a whole, and not as a projection of either India's foreign policies on Afro-Asia, or as a study of a group of independent-minded third world States caught between the great powers. This, in a sense, is the book's strength. Unfortunately, this also seems to be the cause of all its weaknesses and faults. The book falls into two neat parts: an account of the origins and history of the movement and a description of its ideology, and a qualitative statistical analysis of the cohesion, performance and voting and trade behaviour of the movement at three particular stages of its history, 1961, 1964 and 1970. The first part is inadequate, inaccurate and ill-informed. The second though more than adequate, accurate and informed, is nonetheless uninteresting and serves only to corroborate and confirm the already obvious

The descriptive historical first part begins with a failure to recognise the prior existence of nonalignment as an ideology and foreign policy long before the actual convening of the first nonaligned conference at Belgrade in 1961. Nonalignment as a movement no doubt was born only at Belgrade but nonalignment, the ideology around which that movement established itself, has older though still clear-cut antecedents. Willetts simply states that 'it is facile to accept the judgment of the nonaligned politicians, some of whom seek to add legitimacy by giving the ideas a long history', and 'that it was not until the late 1950s that Yugoslavia, Egypt and India began to work together and develop a common approach. Their contribution to nonalignment does not go any further back'. He rejects the claim that Indian foreign policy from independence has been nonaligned, stating that in fact 'the real basis of policy was the claim to be a special type of great power', though he does allow himself a let out clause when he slips in the qualification that Indian nonalignment is 'a variation *sui generis*'.

Having thus decided to treat nonalignment as if it came into being at Belgrade (though even this is not consistently upheld, for at another stage Willetts arbitrarily writes that 'if there is any point at which nonalignment was conceived it was in the 1956 Suez-Hungary crises'), he proceeds to regard 'the communiqués of the nonaligned summit conferences' as the most authoritative statements of the principles of nonalignment. It is therefore hardly surprising that he should thereafter evaluate the link between nonalignment and the Cold War 'by examining the agendas for the summit conferences' and conclude 'that cold war alliances have received little attention'. The fact that the cold war was one of the issues at the very centre of nonalignment appears to have been forgotten whilst analysing the ideology.

Similarly, the role of anticolonialism in the nonaligned ideology has been simply estimated in terms of the numbers of items on conference agendas and their priority. This approach of counting items on a conference document only conceals what it was not opportune to discuss at a conference, but what was nonetheless, central and of concern. Though, in fairness, one must add (and this is one of the places where the weakness of the method does have side advantages), that it allows Willetts to illustrate that 'the overall trend from 1961 and 1970 shows that while belief in disarmament and promotion of peaceful inter-State relations is still honoured as part of the ideology of nonalignment, this component has clearly declined from a near pacifist crusade at the beginning of the decade to being only of secondary importance at the end of the decade'.

The questions that therefore still remain at the end of the first part are unfortunately those the book set out to answer: what was/is nonalignment? What sort of ideology was/is it?

Nonalignment was an attempt to reconstruct international relations, to change the basis upon which



they had been perceived to have been conducted upto the second world war. Nehru made this clear to the Lok Sabha (18th February, 1953) when he said 'There are only two ways of approaching the problem of international relations. One is the conviction that even though we try to avoid it, war is bound to come. Therefore we should prepare for it and when it comes join this party or that. The other way starts with the feeling that war can be avoided.'

As an ideology, nonalignment was a synthesis. To begin with, it was a self-conscious attempt at a new approach to world order and peace. It believed that this novelty lay in its approach to the attainment of peace (see Nehru's 5th April, 1960, address to the I C W A). Then, it was an anti-imperialist, anti-racist, anti-colonialist doctrine. But, in adopting these beliefs, which in the late 1940s were also those of international communism, it, nonetheless did not accept an anti-capitalist and Marxist understanding of history. Furthermore, it had elements of Millenarian revivalism. It had a vision of pan-Asia (later Afro-Asian) harmony — the lynchpin of which was the supposed twin-bond of unity between Afro-Asian peoples as ex-colonial subjects and also as people with a common cultural heritage distinguishing them from the West (which is one reason why none of the European or Latin American invitees, apart from Yugoslavia and Cuba, attended any of the nonaligned conferences).

But at the same time as being pan-Asian, or pan-Afro-Asian, nonalignment also sought to be universalist. For, both Nehru and Tito envisioned a truly 'international' world of equal and independent peoples, free from all taint of racial or colonial divisions, developing their own cultures and philosophies in an atmosphere of peace fostered by nonviolence and the widest of multilateral international relations. And yet, despite this universalism, this very doctrine also presented itself as the champion of the small and powerless nations — for in its rhetoric at least, it aimed to guarantee their independence in a world dominated by great powers. Nonalignment, it now emerges, was therefore the ideology in foreign affairs of the idealistic, young, independent State, hesitant, needy, impatient and yet eager to speak out loudly, clearly and boldly and be heard and listened to.

Willetts, of course, has his answer to critics who 'have their own definitions of what is "essential" to nonalignment'. As he states, 'the position adopted in this book is that it is not appropriate for observers from outside to set up their own definitions. Nonalignment is the ideology put forward by the States that call themselves nonaligned (sic!)'. But the only part that he is prepared to consider is that put forward at official conferences. Anything enunciated in U N speeches or within the domestic environment is presumably considered irrelevant. And as nonalignment has been taken by him to be the decisions of the nonaligned conferences, the actions of India or any other country on its own does not, indeed, cannot, amount to nonalignment.

Apart from the first 45 pages, the remainder of the book is a compendium of numerous statistics and laborious quantitative analysis. Little that is new or revealing emerges, but it is perhaps worthwhile to have quantitative evidence to back up one's knowledge that whereas the nonaligned have often voted cohesively on colonial issues, over east-west issues they often disintegrate, that their trade relations run counter to their anti-colonial rhetoric, that they are active in the U N and that they cannot afford large delegations. But was it worth the effort?

WHEN T N Kaul in his sub-title refers to himself as a 'liberated' diplomat, he no doubt means a retired one, and that perhaps explains why his book is so heavily prejudiced, so badly thought out and so ill put together. It amounts to a collection of rather unanalytical essays, frequently repetitive with no theme or distinctive focus, and little convincing argument. A bit like the dedication, the book aims to encompass everything, specifying nothing and missing the whole point.

The most startling feature of this book is its prejudice. Kaul cannot abide China, and he is always accommodating to and apologetic of the USSR. Hence, with no qualms, he writes, 'Mao was no idealist. Mao was Machiavellian'. Nehru's vision was wider and his horizon broader than Mao's. Mao's was a typically Chinese approach — narrow, ruthless and inhuman — while Nehru's was basically Indian — human and humane'. Even the Sino-Indian war is explained in terms of China's hatred of the USSR. 'they cannot tolerate the friendship of any Asian country with the USSR and consider it as their number one enemy. Hence, their invasion of India in 1962, and the aggression on Vietnam in 1979'.

In contrast, post-unification Vietnam is whitewashed of all blame — even with regard to the mass (forced) exodus of millions of its own 'liberated' population. 'It is not fair to blame Vietnam for this tragedy'. In fact, the whole Vietnam war episode is sketched as if it were a perfidious conspiracy between China and America to exploit Vietnamese interests in their mutual ambition to jointly dominate South East Asia. 'The Chinese felt no compunction in making political somersaults in their attitude to Vietnam, whenever it suited them, in their own interest of coming to an understanding with America at the expense of Vietnamese interests'.

To be fair, the above conclusion is presented after various splashings of quotations from hitherto unrevealed documents, which are, of course, neither named nor are we told of how we may verify them for ourselves, and the reader is thus forced to base the veracity of the new facts on a mere footnote reading — 'This chapter is based on the documents from and discussions with some of the leaders who participated in the negotiations and talks'.

Thus, if the reader were to persevere till the penultimate chapter, wherein Kaul is reflecting on the possi-



bility of the survival of nonalignment, it would no longer be surprising to find that he begins his answer to his own rhetorical question 'Is the socialist camp a natural ally of the nonaligned movement?' with the words 'it would seem unnecessary to stress this obvious fact . ' Strange that this obviousness is only apparent to him, even Cuba found it necessary to try (futilely) to prove and not just stress it

It is in fact on the subject of nonalignment that Kaul shows himself up to have done very little of the reflecting his book promises to offer. Can he sincerely (as a member of the Indian Foreign Service) refer to the Nonaligned (and here he has in fact principally India in mind) as 'the conscience of the world'? Or Czechoslovakia in 1968? Or Afghanistan in 1979? Let me remind him of his own pet phrase 'we have to call a spade a spade'.

And when Kaul argues that it is somehow an infringement of nonalignment to refuse to recognise the Heng Samrin Kampuchean regime, and seeks to establish grounds for recognition as a parallel to those that applied to post-Amin Uganda, he reveals his confusion for what it is. The point in Kampuchea (which is why the Indian argument for not recognising either government was so adroit) was that the super powers were split over which government to support and thus recognition of one would amount to alignment against the other and more particularly against the super power behind it. This is precisely what Prime Minister Kosygin's and Madame Binh's 1979 visits were about. The Indian aim was to keep out of such entanglements in Indo-China. But, there never were such entanglements in Uganda. Therefore, the application of the one argument to the other situation shows an inability to understand both the situation and the merits of the argument itself.

Karan Thapar

#### **PAKISTAN'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** **1948-78: The Failure of a Strategy** by B M Bhatia Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979

THE author of *Famines in India* has broken the decade long silence on the subject of the development of Pakistan economy. It is the first book of its type, as it weaves in a single thread the development strategies pursued by Pakistan since its inception upto the present times. The book is based on a variety of source materials. *Pakistan's Economic Survey* 1977 and 1978, *Pakistan Development Review*, various Pakistani journals, besides papers, reports and surveys of the Pakistan Planning Commission, the Pakistan National Income Commission and others.

The author has reviewed Pakistan's economic development from two perspectives its economic history and the theory of economic growth. The first part lays bare the reasons for Pakistan's failure to establish a national identity. This, the author feels, has been the single most important reason for the

country's persistent state of political and economic crisis. He goes on to analyse the reasons for this.

To begin with, once Pakistan had gained nationhood, its ruling elite, almost entirely from West Pakistan, could not use Islam as the unifying force between politicians, as they were all Muslims. The interests of the ruling elite held precedence over those of the masses and national unity in government decision-making. Further, apart from religion there was little in common between the two wings. Tremendous geographical separation, socio-economic, cultural and ethnic differences added to the problems of evolving a unified polity. The ruling elite avoided general elections from fear of losing power. The result was that the civil-military bureaucracy increased its stranglehold over power until the mask of civilian rule was thrown aside with the *coup d'état* of 1958 when Ayub promulgated martial law. In Bhatia's words 'The problem of finding an identity as a nation was sought to be solved by the ruling elite by keeping the people united in their opposition to India and everything Indian' (p. 16).

Further, the national elite was synonymous with the West Pakistani elite. In the event of elections, power would have passed into the hands of the leaders of the more populous eastern wing. The refusal of the elite of West Pakistan to share power with their counterparts in the eastern wing, and the lack of integration of the economies of the two wings on the basis of equality, were the main fetters in the development of a national identity and unity.

According to the author, economic development in Pakistan has to be seen in the context of the economic situation in which Pakistan found itself after partition and, later, after the formation of Bangladesh. At the very outset, Pakistani economy had to face the tremendous task of coping with 'paucity of natural resources, absence of an entrepreneurial class and trained labour force, and almost an utter lack of banking, insurance and similar other commercial and financial institutions' (p. 236). Coupled with the political and administrative tribulations, it was indeed an extremely difficult task, if not an impossible one, for Pakistan to set itself on the road to planned development. Bhatia shows how the country fulfilled this task in the short span of a decade and congratulates the Pakistani people for exhibiting a great sense of national will to survive.

However, so far as the growth rate went, Pakistan in the first decade presented a gloomy picture. The average was less than 2.5 per cent per year, the same as the growth rate of population. Industrial production in the small scale sector was minimal. Exports declined by Rs. 545 million and imports went up by Rs. 91 million in the first decade after independence. During this period, West Pakistan did better than East Pakistan especially in per capita income and growth of the large-scale industrial sector.

A trend towards diversification of the economy emerged by the end of the first decade, though again



confined to the western wing. Developmental plans were severely constrained by the paucity of foreign exchange reserves. After 1955-56, this became a constant feature forcing Pakistan to rely increasingly on foreign aid, not only for development, but also for consumption expenditure. The foreign trade earnings of Pakistan were made possible through large export earnings of raw jute of East Pakistan which West Pakistan appropriated for its own development and consumption.

During the first five-year plan (1955-60), the total aid to Pakistan was \$1334 million, USA being the single largest donor. This had the unavoidable effect of the linking up of the Pakistan economy to Pak-US relations and changes in the U.S. foreign policy. In the second decade, the decade of development (1958-59-1968-69) witnessed high growth rates. NGP rose by 65.3% in 10 years (6.5% annual average), the per capita income went up by 27.5% in the same period, agricultural output showed annual average growth rate of 4.5%. All other sectors showed a rising growth rate including foreign trade. The pace of industrialization went up significantly — the import of machinery went up from Rs 328 million to Rs 1093 million.

At this time, Pakistan was regarded as one of the six countries with the greatest promise of steady development. According to Bhatia, later events proved that the Ayub era of development was superficial. In fact, his analysis shows that the roots of the economic disaster that followed in the next decade lay in Ayub's development policies. It was the rapid economic development of West Pakistan at the cost of East Pakistan that finally led to the break-up of the two wings.

The end of Ayub's rule and the following two and a half years of Yahya's rule, marked the beginning of the decade of disaster and decadence. During Bhutto's rule, inflation assumed threatening proportions. In 1973-74, it touched an all-time high of 30 per cent. The balance of payments situation steadily deteriorated after the separation of Bangladesh. From July 1971 to March 1977, the increase in foreign borrowings was 81 per cent. The tragedy was that this trade deficit was not a result of developmental needs but of the current consumption requirements of the Pakistani elite.

Bhatia's conclusion is that 'what Pakistan was building really was a consumer society rather than an industrial society' (p 254). This he concludes from facts which show that Pakistan moved straight from the phase of predominant agriculture-based economy to services production as the predominant sector without the intervening phase of advanced industrialization, the emphasis having shifted from commodity to service production.

The author emphasizes the central importance of the creation of a reasonable agricultural surplus for any developing agricultural economy. He feels this to be the only method of effectively tackling simultaneously the problems faced by a developing country.

The agricultural surplus is crucial not only for financing industrial projects in the country but also for importing capital goods and technology. Increased food production only can help to keep inflation in check and limit rural poverty. Bhatia gives a sufficient number of examples to prove the point that logically and historically no country has been able to develop at the cost of agriculture. Pakistan tried to build an industrial superstructure without building a sufficient agricultural base to support it.

Even here, there was a glaring lack of heavy capital goods industries, indispensable for a solid industrial base. Due to such structural weaknesses, in Bhatia's view, the post-Bangladesh era was inevitably one of inflation, food shortages, annual trade deficits and total dependence on foreign aid. The doubling of Pakistan's foreign debt liabilities in 5 years of Bhutto's rule were due as much to his economic legacy as to his failure to reverse the wrong development strategy and growth model.

Zia inherited an economy ridden with serious maladies. The new government has formulated a very ambitious fifth plan. The weakness that Bhatia sees with it is that targets indicate the desire and projected needs of the country, rather than feasibility. According to Bhatia, planning in Pakistan must have as its twin-aims, the removal of mass poverty and achievement of self-reliance as a nation. For this, he suggests, Pakistan would do well to give up the 'technocrat approach' and take the 'social reform approach'. 'This approach attempts to combine raising of growth rate of the economy with increasing degree of distributional justice' (p 263). Bhatia feels that a prerequisite to this development strategy is the democratic election of a popular government. The path of the Pak economy at present is the path of self-destruction, warns the author.

Considering the time-span and scope of enquiry, the book does full justice to the subject. So far, it is the only one of its kind to be published in India. The understanding with which the data has been presented and analysed, exhibits both depth and scholarship. It is a useful work both for the economist, the economic historian and the Pakistani planner. One clear conclusion that emerges is the close connection between economic performance and political structure. Another is that good performance, even if sustained for a long-period, can very quickly change for the worse if the political system is not able to mediate in class or elite conflicts. Both these conclusions are relevant for many other countries and Dr Bhatia's book holds lessons not just for Pakistan planners but also for others.

Aditi Desai

**SHARING THE WORLD'S RESOURCES** by  
Oscar Schachter. Allied Publishers, New Delhi,  
1977.

The metaphor of the world as a spaceship is of recent evocation. The world's natural systems and re-



sources being pushed to near collapse has been caused and understood only by modern industrial man, though it affects all of us on this spaceship. Thus, the principle of *res communis* for the oceans, long enshrined in international law, is now being attacked as inequitable, and greatly reduced in its application because freedom of access and exploitation have often resulted in benefit to the richer and stronger countries, irrespective of relative needs for resources or geographical relationships.

The intellectual origins of our concern for the problems of the survival of the human species are mad-deningly varied and complex. It appears that almost everyone has a point of view that is, perhaps, as valid as everyone else's: the academic in the biological sciences, the scientist, the economist, the conservationist, the crusading layman concerned about the air he is breathing, the water he is swimming in or the next cup of coffee or the litre of petrol, and Oscar Schachter.

Oscar Schachter's book, *Sharing the World's Resources*, can be read, on one level, as a book on the state of the art of international decision making, and on another (I am not a lawyer), as an informative and readable account of the problems involved in resolving disputes involving the use and allocation of global resources.

Nations, like all of us, have their own perception of what constitutes a fair share, which derives from both juridical imperatives and economic assumptions. Oscar Schachter describes how these criteria have evolved and have been applied in various contexts, and how they emerge, either as shared perceptions resulting in normative concepts and criteria, or conflict. These areas of sharing or conflict have been discussed in two broad categories, one concerning such resource areas as ocean space, water basins and rivers, atmosphere and the general global environment which raise questions of transit, allocation of exploitation rights, the sharing of monopoly rents, responsibility for conservation and liability of extra-territorial harm and the second concerning problems of exchange and transfer of goods and services which deal with the pricing and supply of basic raw materials, the sharing of technology, sovereignty over natural resources and world food security. The author has dealt with this complex subject with a clarity that can be easily assimilated.

The author stresses that in a pluralistic and heterogeneous world, a common order would be unfeasible, but that one could reasonably expect and seek to promote a more sustained effort to identify and clarify the multiple goals shared by most peoples, and to relate these goals to specific situations and proposed actions. He displays a free-market faith that governments would resolve disputes or inequities (legal or economic) through the felt necessities of collaboration, which in the present context of global problems and prospects appears overly optimistic and idealistic. Those of us on the sidelines who have to pay debilitating costs to procure energy or be sucked into the

Catch-22 vortex of advanced technology, may be pardoned for thinking that such idealism is like tilting against the windmill.

Belligerent self-interest and nationalism prevailing over reason and international interests are not the prerogatives of fanatical OPEC Sheiks and commodities oligarchs against whom it would be easy to point a finger. Take, for example, the recent Sea Law Conference that ended in a deadlock between the developed and developing nations, with the US threatening unilateral action to 'prevent our legitimate interests from being overridden by arbitrary action authorized through a nose-count of third world nations' (Mr Elliot Richardson, US Chief Representative, at the Sea Law Conference).

The problem is, again, not as simple as implied, and Oscar Schachter takes pains to explain the nuances and shades of the issues involved, but in our social systems, as Jay W Forrester says in *World Dynamics*, 'there are no utopias. No sustainable modes of behaviour are free of pressures and stresses. But many possible modes exist, and some are more desirable than others. Usually, the more attractive kinds of behaviour in our social systems seem to be possible only if we have a good understanding of the system dynamics and are willing to endure the self-discipline and pressures that must accompany the desirable mode. To develop the more promising modes will require restraint and dedication to a long-range future that man may not be capable of sustaining'.

The book's limitation lies in its specificity in dealing with global problems, though it is heartening to come across, in today's generally pessimistic world view, Oscar Schachter's continuing faith in morality and justice and the role of law in the conduct of international affairs.

Optimism or naivete? In a dense book like Schachter's one finds both. He, for example, believes that the food crisis may give rise to a new international normative conception relative to the conception of food. Thus, the high consuming countries are expected to curb consumption both for their own improved health because more consumption leads to greater incidence of cardiovascular diseases and other degenerative conditions and also to make more food, and resources that go to make food, available for distribution where it is needed. This perception of right and duty on the part of the well-fed is supposed to prevail over C P Snow's prophecy that mega-deaths in starving lands, watched on affluent people's television screens would mark the end of any moral community of man.

The trouble with this kind of thought on solving the world's food problem, in an otherwise serious book, is that it lulls people into feeling that the least that they do is sacrifice enough, for otherwise they would suffer the consequences of gluttony. This reminds me of an E Nesbit story (*The Complete Book of Dragons*, Hamish Hamilton).



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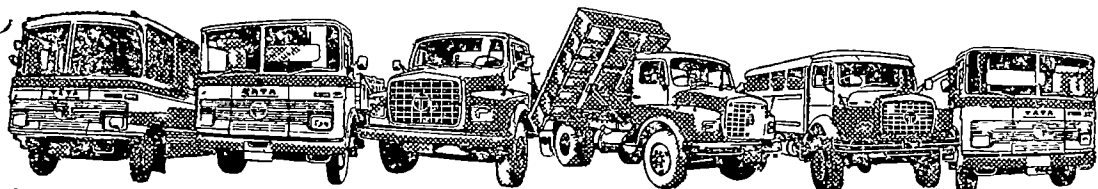
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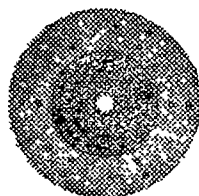
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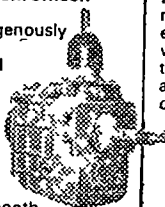
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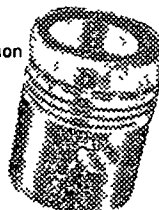
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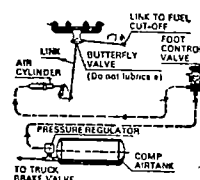
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'I will kill the dragon', said the Prince firmly,  
'or perish in the attempt'  
'It's no use your perishing,' said the Princess.  
'It's the least I can do,' said the Prince  
'What I'm afraid of is that it'll be the most  
you can do,' said the Princess

The reality is that the least that people can do is the most that they will do. Even the metaphor of spaceship earth is being discarded and the lifeboat ethics of Garret Hardin is gaining currency. Hardin says that the rich countries are the lifeboats of the world, and their attempts to be generous to poor countries serve only to diminish what motivates the poor countries had of improving themselves, and speed up the destruction of the environments of rich countries. In such a world-view, what are the probabilities of equitably sharing the common resources? It is not possible to read Oscar Schachter's book, as a layman at any rate, without at the same time following Wittgenstein's admonition, 'don't look for the meaning, look for the use'

A G. Krishna Menon

**AID TO COLLABORATION · A Study in Indo-US  
Economic Relations by P.G. Salvi Popular  
Prakashan**

P G Salvi was a joint secretary in the Ministry of Commerce, Delhi. He has made an extensive study of Indo-US trade during the past, and has 'tried' to prove his thesis that Indo-US economic relations are important at the present juncture and have to be carefully nurtured.

The initial chapter highlights the dominating position of America in the world economy. U.S. strength is attributed to its vast natural and mineral resources. It is now also reaping the returns of its most profitable investment—the education of its citizens. The author goes on to make a brief survey of Indo-US relations during the past, where he discusses the PL 480 agreement, the various joint councils and commissions, and the Delhi Declaration. Enough justice has not been done to the politics and diplomacy involved in such relations. The chapter is also overburdened with unnecessary quotations.

The Indian economy and its performance are analysed in the third chapter which states that agricultural output, especially that of wheat, increased in the early seventies. This statement is partly wrong, as targets were achieved only in 1970-71. There was a drought in the following year, and output was more or less stagnant till the mid-70s, the overall rate of growth of foodgrain production being only 2.1%. The failure of Indian planning is, however, somewhat rightly attributed to the underutilisation of capacity. Despite these failures, the author feels that 'India is making considerable progress on all fronts and is poised for an "Economic Leap".'

The importance of American economic assistance to India is discussed thereafter. It is stated that

although during 1951-70, 56% of the foreign aid to India came from the United States, it is forgotten that India receives the lowest per capita aid of all developing countries from the U.S.A., the World Bank and other sources. The impact and role of the PL 480 agreement are also discussed, but the indefatigable efforts of US ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan certainly need to be mentioned as far as the 1974 PL 480-settlement is concerned.

Indo-American joint ventures are discussed individually in the fifth chapter. The book states that US involvement is largely in sophisticated technology areas, and U.S.A.'s participation in joint ventures was on the increase in the 70s. It is also claimed that 'There is considerable evidence on record that the returns of investment in India were the highest in any country'. This, if stated unconditionally as Salvi does, is certainly an incorrect statement. Such statements can be attributed to unauthentic data, as data sources are not mentioned at all. It should also be kept in mind that the majority of foreign investment flowing into India is on a government to government basis, where politics may be the main consideration and not the rate of return.

Except for 1972, India has had an adverse balance of trade with the U.S.A. The volume of India's exports to U.S.A. have risen in quantitative terms, but its share in total American imports has fallen from 1.2% in 1966 to 0.59% in 1976. The situation may improve due to the Generalised Scheme of Preferences, which has opened up a greater market for India's exports of non-traditional goods. The book rightly states that the scheme does not stipulate items which are eligible for preferential treatment and those which are not. It only lays down rules of eligibility. Agricultural items, textiles and footwear, which are important export items, have been left out of the scheme.

The author claims that market surveys conducted in America show that Americans know little about India. What he does not realize is that if Americans get correct information about India, then the presently incoming investment may also stop. The author feels that 'There is need to continue co-operative endeavours in diversifying India's export pattern and to lay ever increasing stress on and adherence to delivery schedules, maintaining quality control and providing internationally competitive export financing'. Indo-US relations should not be based on aid but on trade and collaboration.

The book has four appendices which contain some useful information about the G.S.P. and the texts of the Indo-US Agreement, and the Delhi Joint Declaration. The book is a fairly detailed study, but lacks continuity and coherence. The references after each chapter indicate that the author has consulted nothing but the 'Times of India' and 'Span'. The book certainly does not make interesting reading.

Ashish Lall



# Communication

ALL good things come to an end. Let us hope this will not be true of the draft programme for India's future.<sup>1</sup> It is utopianly conceived even though it is couched in realistic terms. If the political and moral implications of this draft were to be realized, we would have a just and humane — and enjoyable — society. If the draft, and the discussion to follow, is not to constitute yet another instance of the buzz of negative energies, the following point needs to be faced, discussed and developed.

1. 'An Agenda for India', *Seminar*, 245, Jan 1980

Where does the draft make an advance over earlier similar propositions?

Nikhil Chakravartty has suggested a broad based and popular variant of Marxist-Leninist socialism.<sup>2</sup> The Communist Party's role was conceived in a context of intervention in situations of crisis, whether or not State power could in fact be 'smashed'. In his suggestion that the Communist

2 'Left Projection', *Ibid*



movement strive for a cultural-political hegemony, there is, therefore, an implied understanding — ‘euro communist’ if you like — that the popular movement under the guidance of a totality of socialist and communist parties must assume supremacy over the demands of sectarian considerations. This statement can be reformulated so as to reveal its assumptions more clearly: opportunism is to be deplored, good intentions and commitment are essential, give and take between standardized, institutional and historically specific agents, such as political parties, is difficult, but should be attempted for the general good, but without involving pragmatic compromises, individual creeds are important, from folk culture to politically articulated points of view and the worth of each of such should be recognized, but as part of an interdependent totality of social, hence political, relations in, as it were, forward motion. What does the draft suggest? To this reader, almost the same thing as in ‘Left Projections’<sup>3</sup>. At any rate, its assumptions seem to be the same, demanding, essentially, greater financial autonomy and popular participatory democracy. Which philosophical-political paradigm do these positions reflect? The intersection between ‘liberal democracy’ and ‘scientific socialism’, an excluded middle.

Will capitalism allow that? By raising this rude question I do not for a moment want to suggest that those parties that shout ‘Down with capitalism’ with vigour and sincerity are necessarily also the most effective. They are often in fact cynically manipulated by their superior (in political strength) partners in contingent political alliances, both ideological and tactical. All that I would want to point out is that the draft would have to reckon with existing circumstances. Hence the overriding importance of *knowing* that nothing of the draft can materialize within a framework of capitalism — *and of saying this out aloud* in every minimum positional statement. Participants, therefore, need to agree on several points of action only along with the agreement that the direction of political re-education and economic devolution should be towards socialism and necessarily needs to be projected as such, that is, against capitalism.

I do not want to put the liberals off with my insistence that the centre of consensus should continually shift, and should be made to appear to be shifting, towards the alternative paradigm that wants no truck with capitalism, reformed or otherwise. Let me, therefore, also add that if the plan, conceived as a broad all embracing view from the top, is actually put into action in interaction with the existing ‘real polity’ at its many different levels, the general effect would be to release energies towards greater popular participation in a context of struggling underprivileged groups within a framework of a movement for civil liberties. This would tend to reduce and perhaps eliminate the possibility of India’s politics

coming to be dominated by the strongest leader amongst the organizations at work and ultimately getting to be abusively shaped in its own image.

Lest my remarks are mistaken for a well-intentioned pluralism let me state my priority in response to the draft once again — almost nothing of consequence can emerge from the draft if the suggestions are not made and implemented simultaneously with a critique of capitalist society at a popular level.

However, let us be slightly cynical, for that, as I hope to argue presently, has its own rewards. It is inconceivable that all the different 100 signatories to the draft could also really agree about the overall implications (in their extended logical sense) of such a draft. We know, for example, that Prof. Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri is not a socialist economist (that he may be for civil liberties and against social inequality is another matter), Professor Dhanagare’s research on Indian peasant movements is heavily influenced by Marxism, Prof. Rajni Kothari’s political science by pluralism, and so on. Quite clearly, then, to this writer at least the emergence of such a draft is a political point being made *incognito* — *incognito* because of the varying political positions many of its authors would come to hold once such ideas begin to be translated into organizational terms. What is in fact being suggested by example is an *ad hoc*-ism arising out of a contingent political context. This, as historical experience would confirm, has never been a solution and can only represent an (in its non-pejorative sense) eclectic moment in time. If something substantial is to be got out of it, it must be put into a context of a general critique which people beyond the readers of *Seminar* can follow and identify with over reasonably long periods. Whether or not that would ensure greater success or any speedier implementation we do not know. But it would at least help us all in knowing what its all about.

A final word of cautious footnoting: that I have argued for placing the draft in a framework that should lead towards increasingly severer criticism of the capitalist order should not be misconstrued by the radicals amongst us to mean that liberalism has no political value beyond it serving as a means to an end — their end, as if that is necessarily not the same as that of most people. A casual glance over newspapers and some journals in the last two years would show that unattached individual liberals have been the most vocal on tens of issues that should matter to most socialists and communists as well, from dowry to Mizo to religious to labour problems — and such individuals do not have the support of organizations that would defend them as a part of the hardly clean world of political trade.

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3 ‘Left Projections’, *Ibid*



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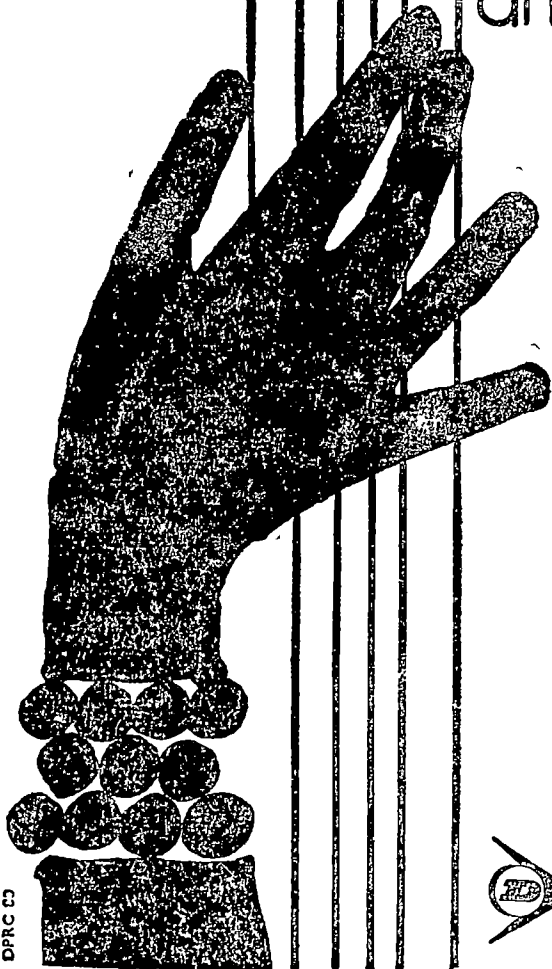
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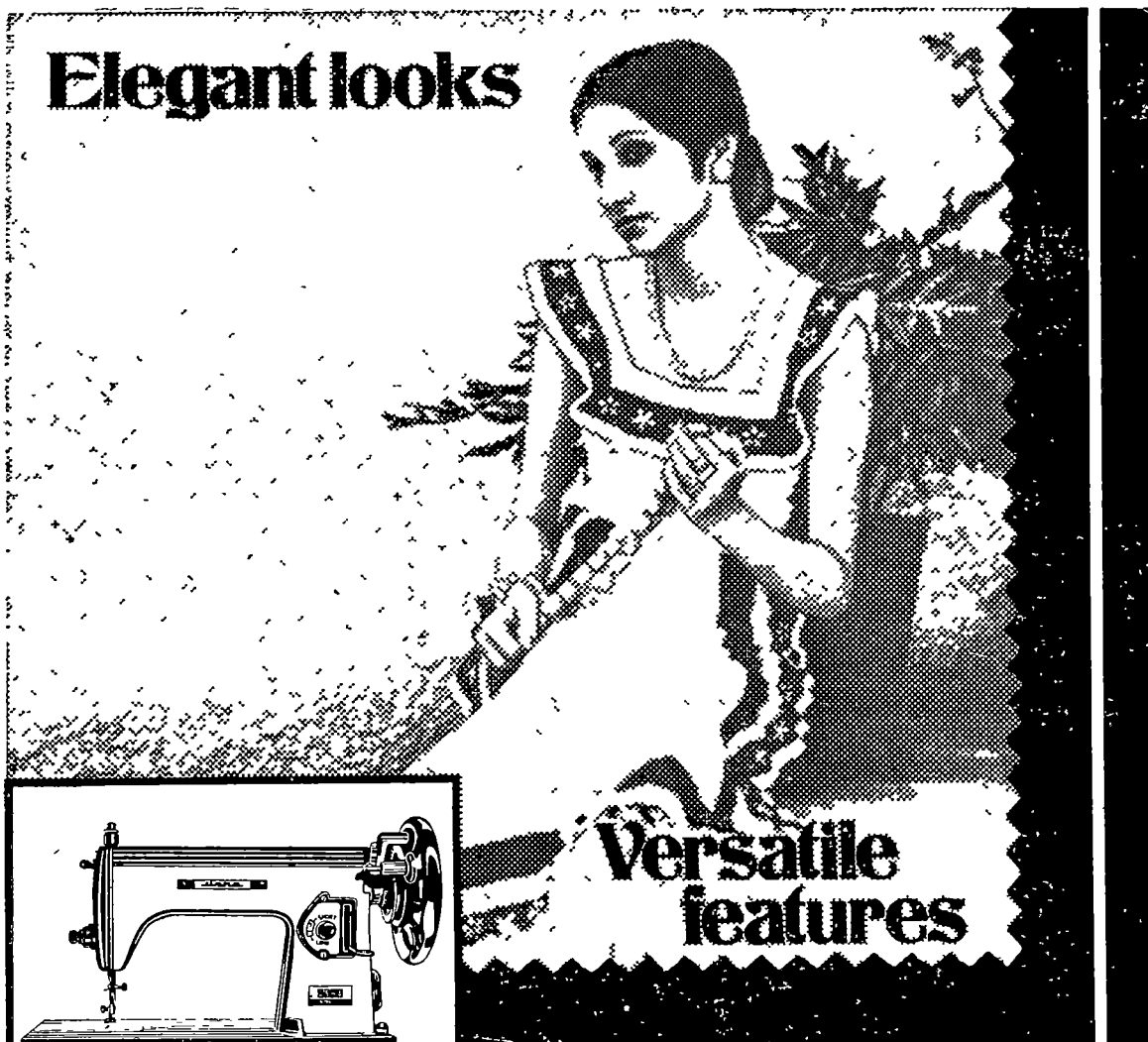
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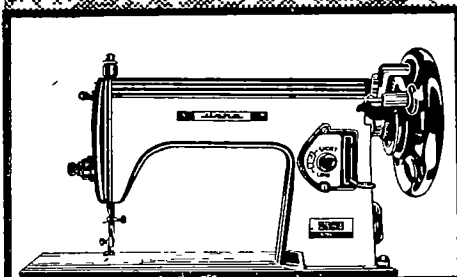
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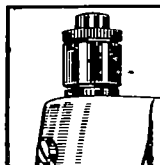
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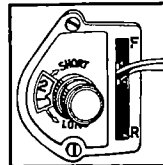
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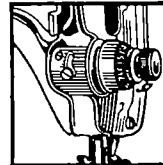
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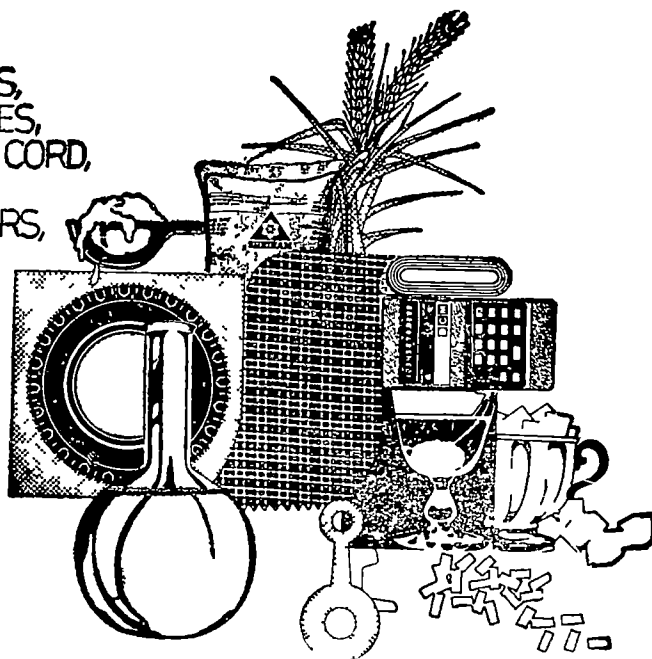
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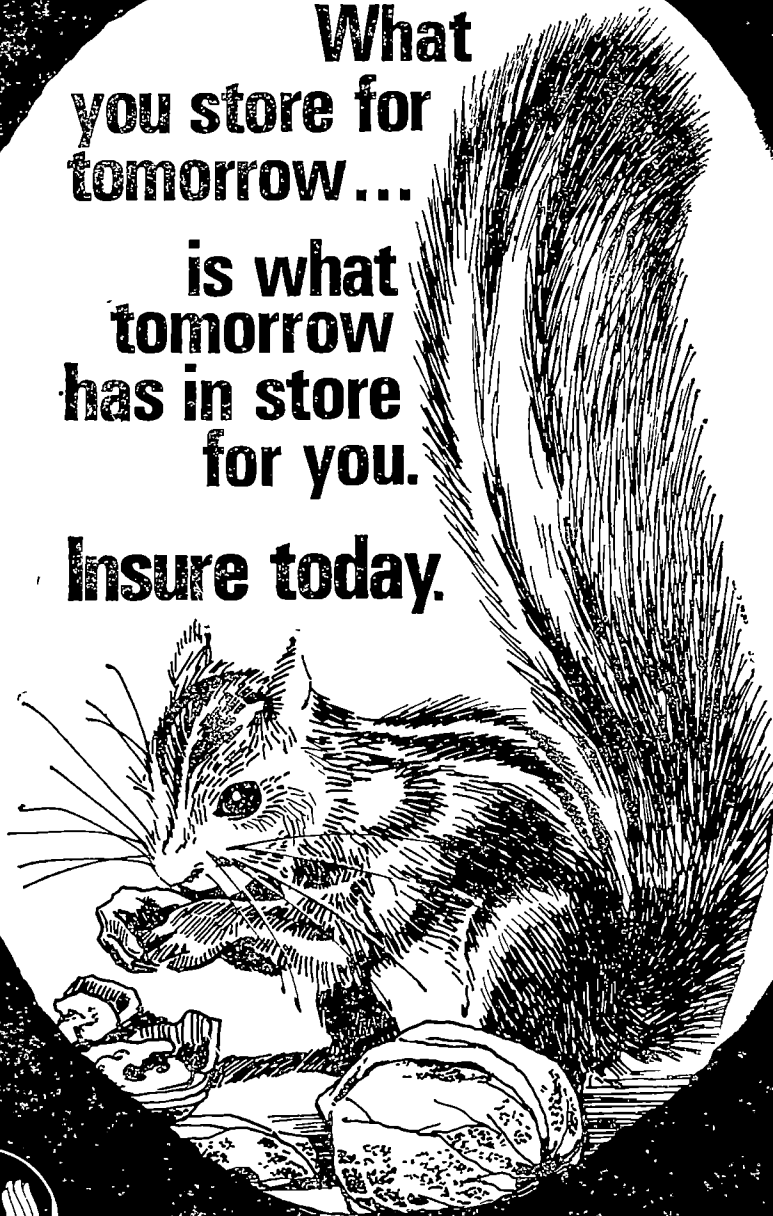
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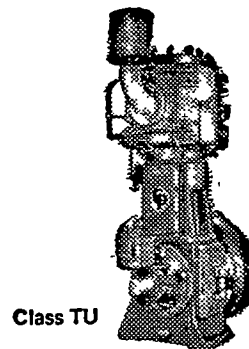
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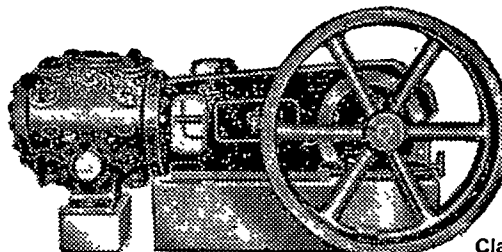
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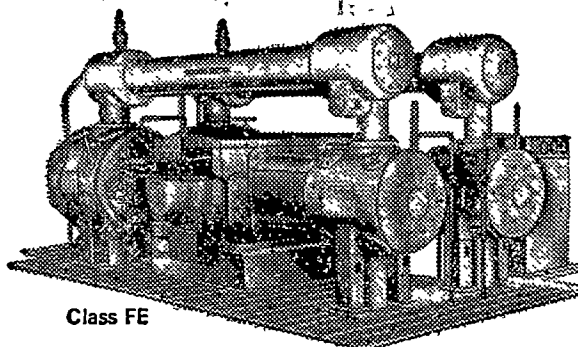
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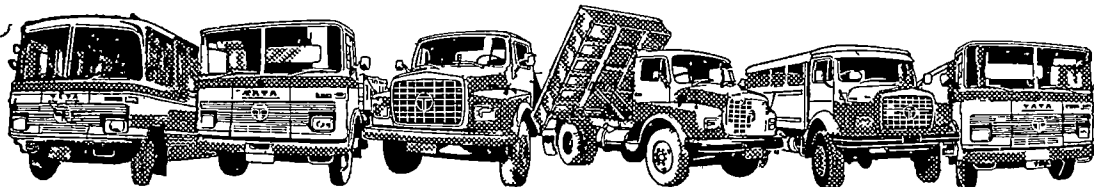
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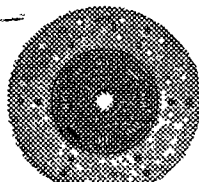
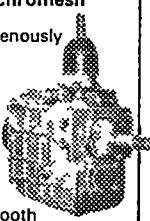

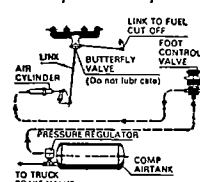
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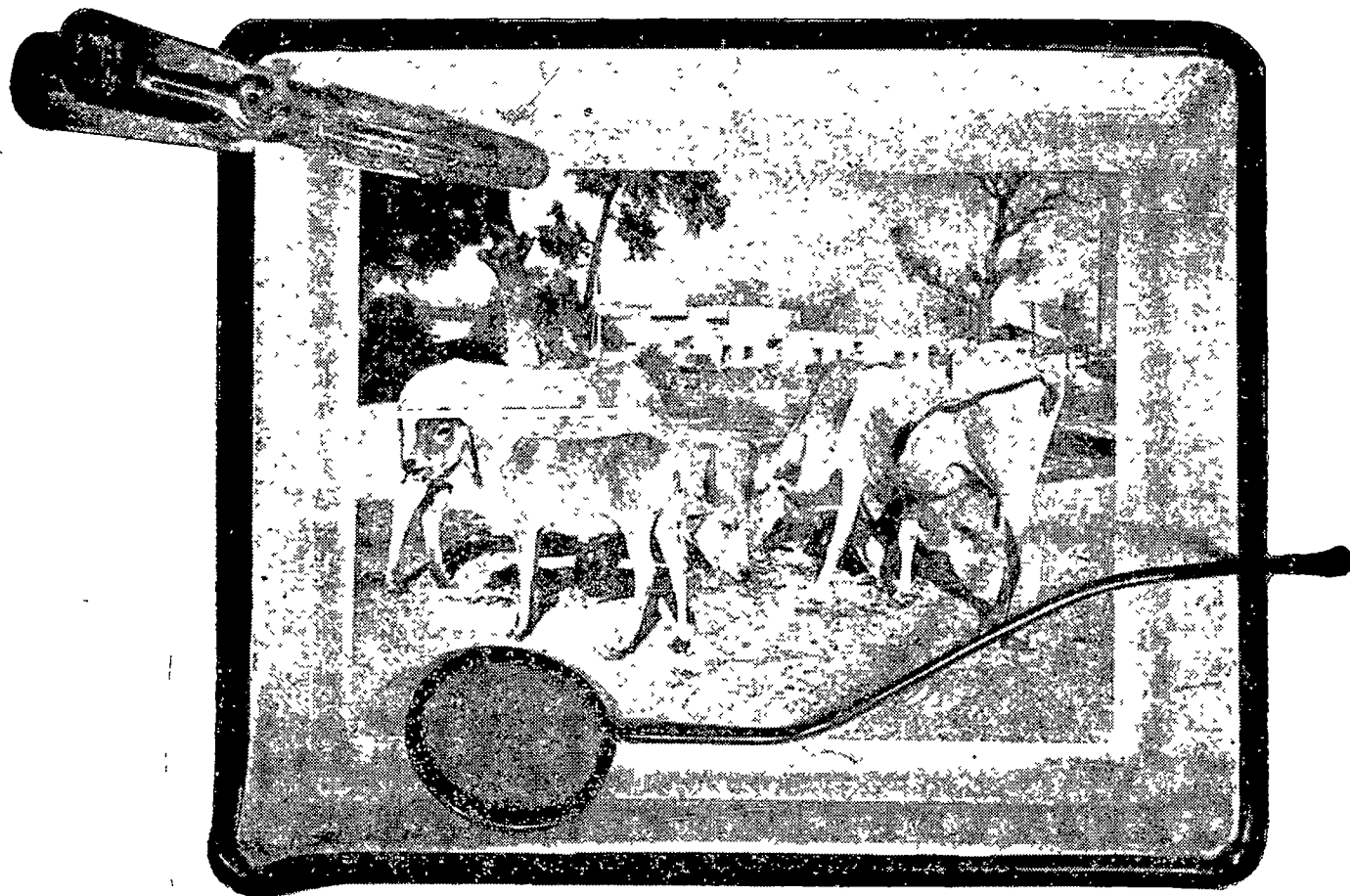
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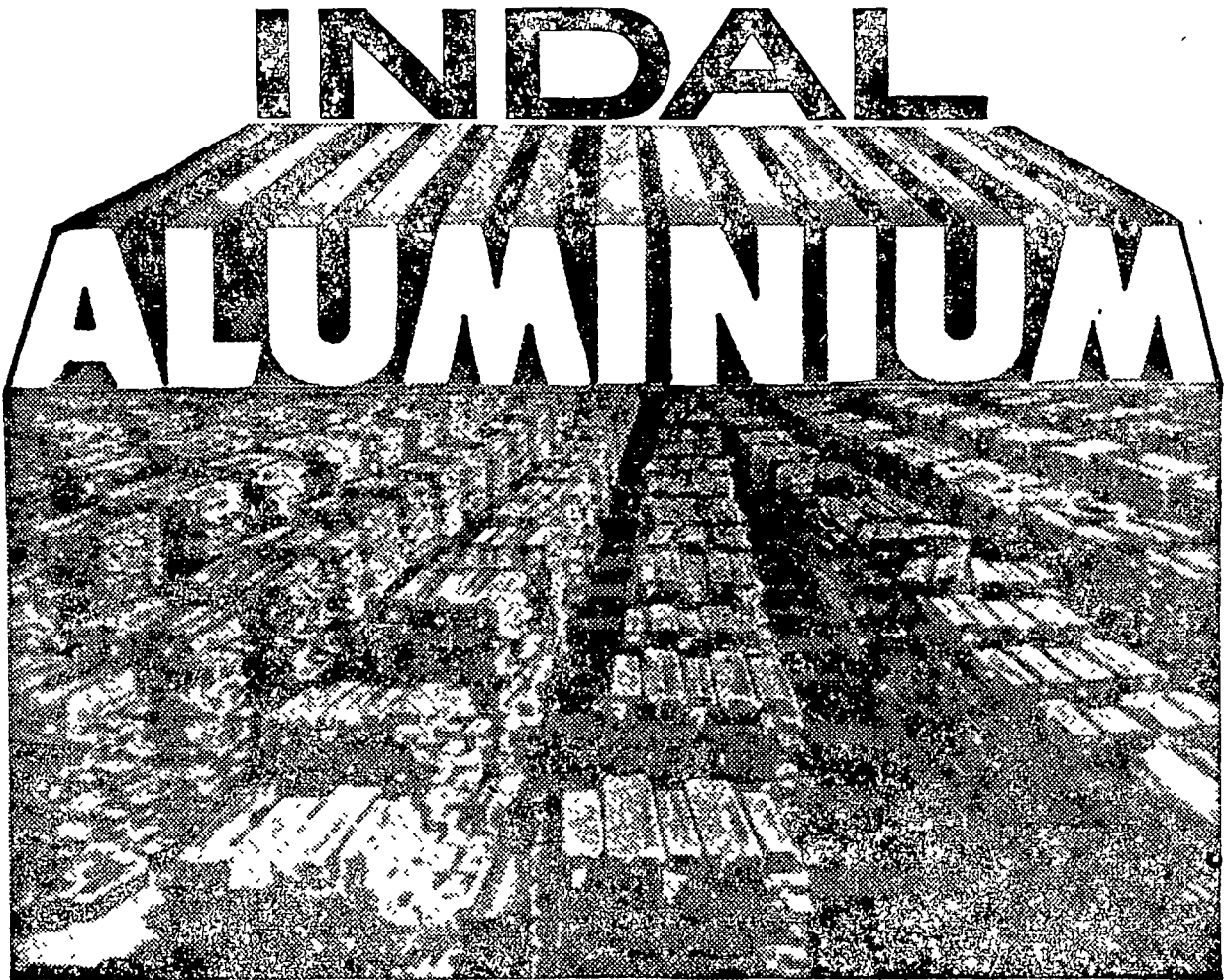
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Bashiruddin Ahmed, Senior Fellow,  
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# The problem

IT would be a mistake to imagine that the old continuum of the political process is still with us. Qualitative changes have taken place since the declaration of an Emergency in 1975 and the events which followed the elections of 1977. The new culture of our politics, influenced deeply by the urban operations of a post-independence generation of untrained, non-professionals interested only in personal advancement, has impacted the fragile structures of democratic life which had been sought to be built up during the first thirty years of freedom. Whether it is Parliament, the Judiciary, or the Press, the old norms are no longer relevant. As for the services, administrative, police and military, their morale is so low that already the old 'steel frame' is showing signs of bending, warping, twisting at critical points. The federal polity is under



the severest strain. Internal stress is made worse by a fast deteriorating situation along the extensive borders of the sub-continent. Destabilisation in the region has immediate repercussions on the complex society of India. An approach to a new political and economic viability has to be worked out for the sub-continent despite the distractions of the moment. This may require the shedding of many postures and concepts which we have until now held sacrosanct — but intelligently, creatively. The bankruptcy of the political parties heightens the crisis. We begin this tortuous effort of reappraisal with an issue on political transitions in the hope that divisive confrontations and polarisations will be avoided. Whatever the ideologues of Right and Left may say, in this context they spell disaster for the continental world that is India.



# Trends and options

BASHIRUDDIN AHMED

IN polities where competitive-electoral processes operate, the early years are invariably marked by a wild growth of parties. In 1960 there were an estimated one hundred parties in the Congo. In Indonesia some forty political groups ran candidates in the elections of 1955. This is not a phenomenon confined to the non-western societies. In comparable periods of their political development, western societies have also witnessed such political fecundity (proliferation of parties). William Chambers, for instance, talks of 'innumerable' parties having come and gone over the years in the United States. According to one count their number runs into one thousand. While some of these parties 'achieved at least passing significance' by winning a crucial percentage of the popular vote in presidential elections, others 'lived out a politically futile existence'.<sup>1</sup>

The Indian experience has been no different. The number of parties we have had in the electoral arena has not been small. If one counts parties that once emerged and disappeared and those which emerged recently or have survived from the past, the number is well over a hundred. Sixty-six parties and political formations, for instance, fielded candidates in

the 1951-52 elections either for assembly or parliamentary seats or both. Of these, fourteen were labelled as 'national' parties and fifty-two as 'State' parties by the Election Commission.<sup>2</sup> Except for Mysore which had no State party and Orissa, Rajasthan and Saurashtra which had one party each, all other States had two or more.

Most of these State parties are now, of course, gone. But, with very few exceptions, even the parties listed as 'national' have either disappeared (KMPP, Krishikar Lok Party, All India Scheduled Castes Federation, Forward Bloc (Subhasist), Socialist Party) from the political scene altogether or, if they survive they are now treated by the Election Commission<sup>3</sup> as State parties (the only party in this category from the 14 being the RSP) or as unrecognised parties (Hindu Mahasabha, Ram Rajya Parishad, Forward Bloc (Marxist), RCPI, Bolshevik Party) which do not qualify for allotment of a reserved party symbol, a privilege only given to recognised parties whose candidates secure not less than 4 per cent of the total valid votes polled in a State or a Union Territory in either the general election to the

1 William N Chambers, 'Party Development and the American Mainstream', in William N Chambers & Walter Dean Burnham (eds), *The American Party Systems Stages of Political Development*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1967, pp 3-4

2 *Report on The First General Elections in India—1951-52*, Vol 2 (Statistical), Election Commission of India, New Delhi, pp 804-805

3 *Report on the Sixth General Election To The House of The People in India—1977*, Vol. 2 (Statistical), Election Commission of India, New Delhi, 1978, pp VIII-X



Parliament or the Legislative Assembly <sup>4</sup>

Other parties have, of course, come in the place of those gone, but the total number of recognised national and State parties has never been anywhere near the number with which we started. From 1962, the number of national parties has been between 7 and 8 in spite of the splits among them (In 1977 the number of national parties, in fact, went down to four because of the emergence of the Janata Party). The number of State parties has likewise declined. With the exception of 1962 when the Election Commission recognised only seven parties as State parties,<sup>5</sup> their number has been between 16 (1967) and 18 (1977). What is more, in contradistinction to 1951-52 when all States except one had State parties, by 1977 most of the State parties were confined to a few and mostly small States. Eight of the 18 State parties in 1977 were in Haryana, Kerala and Goa and another five existed in two of the hill States of the North East and the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

**T**his phenomenon of narrowing down of the party space is a product of the process of structural consolidation of the Party System. Such a consolidation occurs when 'solidly entrenched mass parties' emerge replacing throughout an area 'the pre-existing local authorities and notabilities with a network' of their own.<sup>6</sup> There is no necessary reason why structural consolidation should lead to the emergence of a two party system. It may, as indeed it has elsewhere, produce a multi-party system. All that structural consolidation does is to replace political groups and formations which have nebulous and mainly transient support by parties with a clearly identifiable and enduring popular base. This is precisely what has happened in our system in the

sixties when in addition to the Congress some other parties acquired solid support either in one State (e.g., the DMK) or more than one State (e.g., CPM, JS).

**A**s a consequence of this, three things have happened. One, the votes polled by Independents in the elections to Parliament, which were 16 per cent in 1952 and 19 per cent in 1957, declined sharply falling to an average of 7 per cent in the last three elections. The number of seats in Parliament held by them have likewise come down from a high of 41 in 1952 to 9 in 1980. Concurrently, there has been a consistent and sharp attenuation of the ability of Independents to draw votes and win seats in the elections to State assemblies. These trends bespeak of the extent to which the ability of local leaders and influentials to garner votes as individuals has eroded in the face of efforts of organised parties to mobilise popular support. They also index the emergence of parties as 'real' political entities with party labels beginning to count more than the record or personality of the candidates set up by them.

Two, though the Congress remained the preponderant party nationally, its ability to retain dominance at the State level declined. In the election of 1967 it lost control of the governments in eight States. Even though it subsequently regained control of government in most of these States, it did not succeed in recovering the losses it had suffered in terms of votes in 1967. This is generally true of the North and particularly so of UP and Bihar. But, even more broadly speaking, if one leaves aside Andhra, Karnataka and to an extent Maharashtra where there has been no serious threat to Congress dominance, the situation in most other States has been far more competitive since the fourth general elections than before.

Three, Congress dominance at the national level too weakened. The emergence of several parties with their own autonomous support base was reflected at the national level when Congress votes in the elections to Parliament declined from a high of 47.7 per cent in 1957 to 40.7 per cent in 1967. Though the Congress

in its new incarnation did recoup some of its lost strength in terms of votes in the 1971 elections, its share of votes gained then — 43.7 per cent — remained lower than the average of 46.3 per cent it had polled in the first three general elections.

There were no doubt special circumstances in 1977 when Congress was badly defeated, yet the emergence of the Janata Party and its success would probably not have been possible without the existence of parties with a hard core of support like the Jana Sangh, the BLD, the Socialists, the Cong(O), the Akali Dal and the AIADMK. The Congress has in its third incarnation once again got the better of the Opposition but as in 1971 it has done so with a share of votes (42.6%) lower than it had polled then. Additionally, it now has in Parliament two parties in the Opposition, the Janata and the Lok Dal, whose combined vote share is 28.4 per cent. This fact needs to be noted, for the combined vote of the top two parties in 1967, the Swatantra and the Jana Sangh, was only 18 per cent.

The point of stressing these facts is this: notwithstanding the return to power of the Congress with an absolute majority of seats in the Parliament, the party system is not the same. The similarity with the situation of Congress dominance of the fifties and the early sixties is merely superficial. Today's system is the same as that of the past only in appearance, its parameters and its dynamics are no longer the same.

**I** have discussed these changes elsewhere in great detail.<sup>7</sup> It is perhaps sufficient for the purposes of the argument here to say that the processes of social and economic change have altered the larger social milieu in which the political system now has to operate. The size and character of the political community has changed with groups hitherto on the periphery of the political community entering it with definite hopes and aspirations.

Additionally, non-elite agricultural castes and social groups have, with

<sup>4</sup> *Report on the Fourth General Elections in India — 1967*, Vol. 1 (General), Election Commission of India, New Delhi, 1968, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems, A Framework for Analysis*, Vol. 1, London: Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 244-251.

<sup>7</sup> 'Managing the System', *Seminar*, No. 216, August 1977, pp. 41-47.



improvement in their material conditions, acquired an independent political role. They are no longer camp followers of the traditionally dominant castes, instead they have distinct interests of their own because of which they provide a large social base for parties and leaders in State and national politics. Thirdly, a multiplicity of relationships and dependencies has emerged between rural areas and urban, between the agricultural and the industrial economy, between one class or occupational group and another.

This system of interactions, to be sure, does not cover all groups and areas in the country but it is now wide enough spatially to turn what was initially a small political community, confined essentially to urban areas, into a sub-continental entity. As a corollary of these changes, politics has acquired great relevance for more and more social groups and categories who find that an ever growing part of their lives, and the conditions around them, are affected by what parties and the governments do or fail to do.

Paralleling these developments is a change in the political sensibilities of the people. There is considerable disenchantment in growing sections of the public with the old style of politics which is marked by self aggrandisement and hubris of the leaders, by rampant factionalism, shifting loyalties and alliances, and the endemic instability of governments in the States produced by unprincipled struggles for office and group advantage. They now want purposive politics, not political manipulation. They want leaders, parties and governments to conform to high ethical standards of public action and behaviour. And, above all, they want a strong and effective government, but one which is just and which acts according to clearly established and widely accepted political norms rather than in ways which are high handed, arbitrary and capricious.

It is in the context of such changes that we need to view the inability of governments at the Centre to retain popular confidence and support for long. Twice in succession, parties carried into power on the crest of a popular wave suffered a widespread

loss of public goodwill long before they were turned out of office at the elections. This is a new phenomenon in Indian politics. Democratic theory no doubt regards an alternation of parties in office as a sign of systemic health.

The two changes of government at the Centre however, are not quite the kind one associates with normal competitive politics. For, when in 1977 the Congress was defeated by the newly formed Janata Party, it was no ordinary defeat. Nor was Janata's defeat at the hands of the Congress-I in 1980 a case of low-key alternation of parties in office so characteristic of routine democratic politics. In each case instead each defeated party was virtually pulverised.

I have suggested elsewhere that such major reversals in the electoral fortunes of parties is a characteristic of the phase of realignment — a phase in which there is a volatility in party loyalties at the grassroots.<sup>8</sup> It is not that voters are turning back to local notables or falling under the spell of political brokers. Political parties continue to be the main politically orienting entities for voters and social groups, except that the additional support necessary to put a party into office at the national level disappears not long after the party's success.

This, of course, reflects a basic problem which has been persistently bedeviling our national politics: it is the problem of transforming power attained through the ballot into a 'widely accepted title to rule'. The size of a ruling party's majority in Parliament clearly matters little in the present phase of our politics in converting its power into authority; what seems to count more instead is what a party does when in office. And, 'what it does' appears to include not just 'performance' in the usual sense of delivering the goods, but equally the fact of a ruling party's departure from or conformity to widely accepted norms of political action and public behaviour. Lapse on either count is fatal, it impairs the legitimacy of the rulers.

The last ten years have recorded precisely such an impairment of legitimacy at the Centre. We have witnessed, to borrow words used by Kochanek in a different context, a 'lack of governmental capacity to govern (at the Centre) despite massive majorities' for the ruling parties.<sup>9</sup>

Mrs Gandhi has once again come to power with a two-thirds majority of seats in Parliament. Those fearful of the negative consequences of a fragmented Parliament with no majority for any one party must feel greatly relieved. Whether such fears were justified or not, the system in all probability could not have withstood another period of non-governance. There is now also the likelihood that the Congress-I will gain control of governments in almost all the States going to the polls in the next month or two. But then will the situation be any different this time than earlier? Will Mrs. Gandhi succeed in resolving the persisting problem of stable authority at the Centre or will the problem escape solution again for a third time?

Mrs Gandhi is, of course, the only political leader around who has managed twice in the last ten years to evoke widespread public support by successfully expressing the deepest fears, hopes and aspirations of different social groups and sectors throughout the country.<sup>10</sup> She indeed has charisma, though her charisma, like that of any other charismatic leader, does not operate on the same scale under all conditions and circumstances.

If an index of charisma is unvarying support for a leader under fair or foul weather, then Mrs Gandhi has such support in good measure. But this support is not large enough in itself to put her into office, or to provide her, once she is there, the degree of public legitimacy necessary for

9 Stanley A. Kochanek, 'Mrs Gandhi's Pyramid: The New Congress', in Henry C. Hart (ed.) *Indira Gandhi's India: A Political System Reappraised*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1976.

10 Ashis Nandy, 'India's Political Culture', parts 1 and 2, *Times of India*, May 13 and 14, 1977.

8 'The Crisis of Change', *Seminar*, No 242, October, 1979.



the effective functioning of a government

The outcome of the 1977 elections to the Parliament provides one kind of evidence for this view. Another is provided by data from the opinion polls conducted by the Indian Institute of Public Opinion (IIPO) during the period 1966 — 1975 that covers Mrs Gandhi's first ten years in office. The poll data are, however, important not merely as further evidence for our assumption but also for what they tell us about the nature and limits of Mrs Gandhi's popularity. They are instructive in the extreme, particularly since many inside and outside the Congress-I believe that except for the Emergency or, even more specifically, the excesses committed then, Mrs Gandhi's position was invulnerable in terms of public support throughout this period.

The poll data available is primarily for political opinions in metropolitan cities. But as IIPO's own polls covering other towns and rural areas and subsequent events show, the readings taken of metropolitan opinion were more often than not a close 'reflection of the winds of political change' in the rest of the country. The data of main interest to us here is that on the Prime Minister's popularity which was measured by the Institute with the following question: 'On the whole, what is your opinion of the performance of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi — very good, fair, bad, or

As the data shows, Mrs Gandhi started off in May 1966 with an impressive degree of popular acceptance which probably reflected more than anything else a sense of public relief and national consensus at the smoothly managed succession soon after Prime Minister Shastri's sudden death. For, by October 1966 her popularity rating had declined to 112, a level under which it remained for the next two years. It was only after the bank nationalisation that Mrs Gandhi's popularity increased sharply from 111 in February 1968 to 165 in August 1969. This was followed by the split in the party and the 1971 elections in which she secured a two-thirds majority of seats in Parliament for her New Congress.

In the period after the impressive Lok Sabha win her popularity remained at the 1969 level. But, as the IIPO survey conducted in August '71 showed, in spite of a popularity score of 168 at the time, '(I)t was not all adulation for the Prime Minister. In the same survey signs of disenchantment—though not very widespread—were vaguely discernible. The 1971 budget had started eroding her popularity. Three in ten persons said she had "gone down" in their estimation after the presentation of the budget. In response to another question only one in ten said that she was "doing all she should" to implement her election promises. Twice that proportion (22%), on the other hand, said she was doing "nothing at all". A majority, however, still kept their

The Bangladesh war obviously changed the position, 'Economic privations were forgiven a grateful nation gave Indira Gandhi a massive mandate in the 1972 Assembly Elections'<sup>13</sup> and an all time high score of 260 'out of a possible 300 maximum' on the index of popularity. However, soon thereafter the tide began to turn with her popularity score declining to 161 by February 1973. Congress defeats in the bye-elections held around this period reflected the change in the public mood. By June '73 there was a marked drop in her popularity. Within a matter of three months Mrs. Gandhi's popularity score had dropped from 161 in February to 109 in June.

The IIPO June survey showed that this was a purely personal loss for the PM. Unlike in the past when Mrs Gandhi's popularity and image were more positive than the popularity and image of her party, the June survey showed 'the Prime Minister losing ground while the Congress Party held its own'. As the IIPO observed 'the fact that the electorate is turning sharply against the Prime Minister shows that the politics of charisma has ended'.<sup>14</sup>

It is significant that the slump in Mrs Gandhi's popularity noted in February and June 1973 continued, with further marked drops in the subsequent period bringing down her popularity rating to an all time low of 63 by September 1974. Only twice between June '73 and September '74 was there a slight improvement in her popularity score. In October '73 this improvement was probably due to the Indo-Pakistan agreement on the repatriation of prisoners of war and civilians. IIPO's survey data for October '73 shows that 63 per cent of the metropolitan sample were gratified with the agreement reached.<sup>15</sup>

The improvement in June '74 reflected the impact of two events,

May '66 170	Oct '66 112	Dec '66 112	Aug-Sept '67 101	Feb '68 111
Aug '69 165	Aug '71 168	Jan '72 260	Feb '73 161	June '73 109
Oct '73 120	Dec. '73 91	March '74 82	June '74 109	Sept '74 63

very bad? We give above the weighted scores on this measure from May 1966 to September 1974, a period which ends much before the Emergency was imposed.<sup>11</sup>

faith in her, they thought it was too early to judge and she was at least "doing something". The Prime Minister was thus not in so commanding a position as was generally believed after her massive victory a few months earlier.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The data are from *Monthly Public Opinion Surveys* (MPOS) Vol XVIII, No 7, April 1973, p. IV of the Blue Supplement and MPOS, Vol XIX No 11, August 1974, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> MPOS, Blue Supplement, Vol XVIII No 7, p. III.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. IV.

<sup>14</sup> MPOS, Vol XVIII, No 9, June 1973, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> MPOS, Vol XVIII, No 12, September 1973 p. 6.



the explosion of the atomic device in Rajasthan and the 'decisive action' on the railway strike<sup>16</sup> But in both cases the improvement was very temporary The score of 120 in October '73 had dropped to 91 by December that year and the score of 109 for June 1974 had fallen to 63 by September that year

**I**t will be useful at this point to compare the findings of the metropolitan opinion polls with those of the survey the IIPO undertook in UP in December 1973/January 1974, just before the State Assembly elections there The UP survey too shows that both Mrs Gandhi and the Congress Party lost a lot of ground between 1971 and 1973/74 In fact, Mrs Gandhi's popularity score in UP turned out to be just as low (92) as her score (91) in the metropolitan survey of the same period She was, however, doing relatively well among the scheduled castes both in the country as a whole and in UP Her score on the popularity measure in the first case was 119 and in the second 126 On the other hand, her support among the Muslims in UP had declined as much as in the general population<sup>17</sup>

The UP survey also showed that her image, as that of the Congress Party, had undergone a drastic change Mrs Gandhi was no longer identified with 'Garibi Hatao' Only one in eleven persons interviewed regarded her as a champion of the poor A substantial 33 per cent of the sample, in fact, felt she represented the interests of the rich But, what is more, by early 1974 a large number of people in UP no longer viewed her as a person of 'strong' convictions Only 27 per cent considered her to be a principled person, 47 per cent regarded her to be an opportunist much like any run-of-the-mill politician<sup>18</sup>

There was a corresponding change in the image of the Congress Party as the protector of the poor Only

one person in sixteen would credit it with concern for the poor, in fact, a little over 50 per cent felt it would never be able to eradicate poverty Furthermore, the party also lost the image it had in 1972 as a party of national consensus In the 1972 survey of the IIPO, sixty per cent had ranked it as a party of 'all classes', in December/January 1974 only 25 per cent held this view Only on one score — its capacity to protect the interests of Harijans — did the Congress manage to retain some credibility<sup>19</sup>

The results of the 1974 elections to the UP Assembly clearly reflected these changes in public orientations to Mrs Gandhi and her party Though the Congress raised its tally of seats by 4, from 111 in 1969 to 115, its votes dropped from the peak figure of 48.75 per cent in the 1971 elections to the Parliament to 32.19 per cent in the 1974 Assembly elections<sup>20</sup>

**T**he explanations for such a rapid rise and decline of support for Mrs Gandhi and her party are probably many Most people would be inclined to attribute this pattern to the inability of Mrs. Gandhi's government to control prices or attend to economic problems — shortages, unemployment, poverty etc Such an economic explanation is indeed valid, but only within limits And this for at least two reasons Firstly, a look at Mrs Gandhi's popularity scores (see table) shows that the time intervals between two measurements are, in most cases, short Unless one attributes a high degree of sensitivity to the public and virtually no lag-time for the impact of a continuously worsening economic situation on them, it would be difficult to sustain the economic explanation

Clearly there are other factors influencing the public mood This is strikingly demonstrated, of course, by the massive increase in Mrs. Gandhi's popularity in January 1972 following the Bangladesh war Her

popularity shot up notwithstanding the 'signs of disenchantment' connected with the presentation of the central budget that year which the IIPO found in its survey of August 1971

Secondly, by formulating an explanation of loss of popular support by leaders and parties in economic terms, one tends to treat economic policy and actions of a government as if they were in a class by themselves with a government's general style of system management bearing little relation to their effective solution or its absence There, presumably, are some economic problems a satisfactory solution to which is barred by the class interests of the rulers and the correlation of social forces in the polity. But surely there also are other areas of economic activity where no such inhibitors operate and yet the failures of performance in these areas are no less striking than in the former

It seems to me that it is not very meaningful analytically to attribute different reasons for failures in different fields when one is dealing with unsatisfactory levels of governmental performance On the other hand, I am inclined to suggest that ultimately failure in the economic sector as in any other is as much due to the general style of political management which a leader or a party employs when in office

**M**rs Gandhi's inability to sustain public support and confidence during her first 10 years in office was, I believe, a function primarily of the strategy she adopted for the management of power It was a strategy which placed a high premium on centralized control of the party After six years of intra-party conflict (1966-72) Mrs Gandhi was not likely to seek to dominate the party solely through her charisma

The intra-party battle, as Kochanek observes, 'taught her a bitter lesson that led her to consolidate her power so that no potential challenger could emerge (Such a consolidation of power) resulted in a pyramidal decision-making structure in party and government in which all key institutional positions were staffed by loyal and trusted followers Although

<sup>16</sup> *MPOS*, Vol XIX, No 8, May, 1974, pp 5-12

<sup>17</sup> *MPOS*, Blue Supplement, Vol XIX, No 4, January 1974, pp 3 and 5

<sup>18</sup> *MPOS*, Blue Supplement, Vol XIX, No 5, February 1974, p 2

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p 5

<sup>20</sup> The 1974 vote for the Congress was even lower than the vote it polled in the 1969 Assembly elections (33.69) which were held before Mrs Gandhi's popularity score had moved upwards.



the decision-making structure prevented threats to her personal power, it tended to centralize decision-making, weaken institutionalization, and create an overly personalized regime.<sup>21</sup>

In a sense, what Mrs Gandhi had done was to restore the pattern of strong central control which had eroded in the years after Nehru's death. But the structure she created was more highly centralized and personalized and far less institutional than that under Nehru. Secondly, she re-established centralized control in a markedly different way than it was centralized in the past. She eased out of office powerful State leaders like Sukhadia in Rajasthan, V P Naik in Maharashtra, Biahmananda Reddy in Andhra, M M Chaudhury in Assam. In their place she nominated people who had no local support base of their own.

Congress legislature parties in each case 'dutifully endorsed their new leaders unanimously, (while) they deeply resented the imposition of outsiders from above'. With little credibility and even less authority, Mrs Gandhi's nominees found it difficult to survive in office even with support from New Delhi. 'By the middle of 1973', as Kochanek notes, 'Mrs Gandhi was unable to sustain this pattern any longer, as one nominated chief minister after another was voted out of office by the State party or was being severely challenged by dissident Congressmen'.<sup>22</sup> Mrs Gandhi did try to retrieve the situation for herself by allowing State parties a free hand in selecting their own leader.

**B**ut it was late, for the damage had already been done. The belief that Congress would restore governmental stability which the Opposition had shown itself incapable of doing in States with SVD governments was largely destroyed. Furthermore, with Chief Ministers spending all their time trying to stay in power, serious economic problems facing the States remained unattended to, creating widespread popular discontent in one State after another. And, with the weak and ineffective State Governments being closely identified with

central Congress leadership and particularly Mrs Gandhi, 'local discontent was easily translated into a threat to the national government itself'.<sup>23</sup>

The biggest challenge to the political power of the Congress at the Center came from an aggregation of grievances which were initially grievances against incompetent State Chief Ministers and the rampant factionalism in the State parties. Thus while 'the pyramid of power she had created from 1966 to 1971 foreclosed revolt within the party against her'<sup>24</sup> it unwittingly contributed to what one presumes she wanted to avoid, viz, the loss of public support for her.

**T**he present party she leads is much more of Mrs Gandhi's own creation than was the New Congress of 1969. In fact it is not a party with a following and an identifiable and constant set of activists and leaders operating in a well structured framework of norms, roles and relationships. Instead the Congress-I today is essentially a leader with a mass following. Whatever activists and other leaders it has are mostly faceless men with uncertain tenures drawing the power they wield temporarily entirely from the top.

Likewise, the organisation it has is primarily notional, the Congress-I as a party is not quite the palpably real institution that the Congress was under Nehru. If Mrs Gandhi prefers, as she probably does, to operate the polity with an open democratic framework, then it is essential that a sharing of power replace its personalisation, that a leadership drawing its power from the grassroots rather than above be allowed to emerge.

Her restored charisma, in other words, should be used in the service of shoring-up and reinforcing the institutions of an open polity before it dissipates again as in the past. This was Nehru's strategy of power management and, as history shows, it served his own political interests as effectively as it did those of the nation.

21. Kochanek *op cit*, pp 104-105

22. *Ibid*, p 111.

23. *Ibid*, p. 114

24. *Ibid*, p. 115.



# Political consciousness

ASHIS NANDY

THE Janata rule was distinctive even in its demise. For about a year, it had been obvious that the Janata was a transitional configuration in a transitional phase of Indian politics. Its disintegration was widely expected, if only slightly later. But few expected the disintegration to lead, only two years after 1977, not merely to political instability, but also to the erosion of public faith in political processes and parties.

By itself, this loss of faith may

seem a minor case of political cynicism in an ancient society which has seen many regimes rise and fall. But, seen in context, it is also often a prelude to authoritarianism. The political sociology of many post-colonial polities shows that authoritarian take-over is often preceded by a political culture of limitless horse-trading and political chess-playing, in the context of a culture deeply suspicious of competitive politics itself. Gradually, every change of government begins to look like another shuffle of the same fifty two cards and politics itself becomes discredited as a game of crooks. So, when finally an onslaught on the system comes, few are willing

This article draws heavily upon a paper written as a backgrounder for a seminar organised by the India International Centre on December 16, 1979.



to risk anything to resist the take-over.

In the third world, the sources of such political cynicism often lie in the past. Contrary to popular belief, some forms of colonialism had carefully protected the traditional hierarchies and the traditional social institutions in the colonies. In matters of social policy, colonialism believed in *laissez faire* and in taking the line of least resistance. In most cases, it did not directly destroy the traditions of a society, it either froze them (as in the case of Hindu law in nineteenth century India) or it promoted non-critical traditionalism or reactive, rootless anti-traditionalism. But, on the whole, colonialism retained the old social hierarchies with minor modifications. So when, after independence, the introduction of competitive politics began to break down these hierarchies, altering the traditional balance of power among social groups, there still persisted the domination of the genteel political style of the first generation of nationalist leaders coming from the upper classes who had taken over from the colonial rulers. But soon the inner logic of democratisation began to throw up a new leadership drawn from the lower strata of the society, unversed in the niceties and sophistries of the earlier generation of politicians.

Representing the newly mobilised sectors of the society, this second generation of leaders is often unable to conform to the established political norms. They thus arouse immense hostilities in exactly those sectors of the society which had produced most of the first generation of the leaders and who now face the threat of political powerlessness: the educated, urban, middle classes, the relatively more cosmopolitan tertiary sector (specially the professions), or as in the case of India, the upper caste Brahminic elite. To them, the new generation of politicians coming from the backwaters of the society seems the very anti-thesis of modern politics. Rural, low-caste, semi-literate, parochial, unpolished and cold-eyed, this new generation of politicians seems totally unsuited to the national political scene, totally committed to their self-interest and self-advancement, and totally devoid of any larger political vision.

Worst of all, these wicked leaders seem to enjoy an almost unnatural advantage in competitive politics by refusing to observe any of the conventional rules of political warfare. Indeed, unlike the first generation of upper class, westernised, 'literate' politicians, these new politicians are full-time professionals, they do not have anything else by way of livelihood to fall back upon.

Their economic and social status and even the meaning of their life are organised around politics. Electoral success and failure and political office are matters of life and death to them and they are always willing to go all out in politics. In fact, they enter politics not, as in the case of liberals and radicals produced by the middle classes, to realise some particular vision of good politics, but to openly use politics to improve their own and their family's social status, mobility and, more generally, their life chances. Only incidentally do they contribute towards the democratisation of a society.

It is the intolerance of this newly-mobilised sector which some students of authoritarianism (such as Nolte) identify as the major cause as well as symbol of fascism. It is this intolerance which seeks legitimacy by talking of a failure or crisis of national character. Such perceived crisis redesignates every conceivable institutional deficiency as psychological in origin, it redefines every bad policy as a product of a particular cultural characteristic. It thus allows the moral revulsion of the urban middle classes to be directed against those who have tasted power for the first time and are eager to hold on to that power at any cost.

The anarchy and normlessness of everyday politics then begins to look like a disease which could be cured only by tough measures, through a modern centralised power structure efficiently pursuing enlightened policies for the masses who are basically seen as passive consumers of such policies and as fit for training, improvement, mobilisation and, if necessary, coercion. Depoliticised experts or technocrats and bureaucrats are then seen as the true instruments of policy rather than the politicians, and the masses are seen

as simple-minded, gullible non-experts who, being irrational and devoid of scientific temper, must be carefully guided, educated or, as the now-fashionable neo-marxian slogan would have it, conscientised. However bizarre he may appear to many Indian intellectuals of the right and the left, Sanjay Gandhi is a natural product of such a consciousness of social change and public life.

To protect the polity against this intolerance and for the survival of open politics, one therefore needs something more than a purely moral position on the kind of politics we are witnessing in the country today. The challenge is to contain to some extent the politics of pure bargaining and to identify politicians and parties by the social and psychological forces they represent rather than by their stated ideologies, party labels, rhetoric or even, for that matter, their political skill so that a populist or charismatic solution does not emerge and restore the hegemony of the traditional elite in the name of efficient political or economic management, radicalism or national good. This calls for a rather subtle management of the culture of politics and the observance of certain minimum limits in bargaining.

The anti-defection bill which everybody once talked about but which was never passed, the suggestion that electoral expenses should be financed by the government which only has now led to a raising of the ceiling on electoral expenses, the idea of ombudsmen now lying buried under the time-tested tradition of employing ad hoc enquiry commissions, the autonomy which was to be granted to All India Radio and Doordarshan but was later found to be too hot — these have all been unconscious attempts to walk the razor's edge between the curtailment of the political process in favour of those traditionally skilled in the style of national and cosmopolitan politics and giving full scope to the 'vernacular elite' and risking the destruction of the legitimacy of open politics itself among a large section of Indians.

Once such legitimacy is badly damaged, there comes a time when even a local leader no longer looks a hero



to his clientele giving a tough time to the non-locals to help his own kind. He increasingly looks like a common, uppity crook who does not know his place and who recognises nothing as sacred. A large number of people may still continue to deal with him and even try to get favours from him, but they would not generalise their reluctant acceptance of the man to the system he represents, they would no longer see competitive politics as a means of improving their own life chances or advancing their community's good. On the other hand, unless one risks this legitimacy of politics, it is impossible to build, however paradoxical this may sound, the long-term legitimacy of open politics in an inequitable society like India. This is the dilemma in which we are caught today.

**M**ost Indian leaders are now looking increasingly like sectional leaders wedded to the principle of pure politics. Basically organisation men and professional politicians, they have proved themselves superb head-counters who also can, at the drop of a hat, produce good ideological justification for whatever they are doing on grounds of *realpolitik*. Raj Narain, Madhu Limaye and now Jagjivan Ram speaking of the RSS as if they have accidentally discovered it in the Janata closet last month, Devraj Urs speaking of Mrs Gandhi's authoritarianism after being with her through her halcyon democratic days, the CPI swearing by an open polity and attacking Mrs Gandhi for being a threat to that hallowed concept — all these begin to pall on the public, if not after the twentieth repetition, at least after the fiftieth political somersault.

Our last three prime-ministers too have only underscored the society's ambivalence towards such politics. When faced with populist challenge, Mrs Indira Gandhi, a pure politician who became a prime minister by outwitting others of her kind, dutifully produced a version of authoritarianism which expressed the disenchantment of the entrenched elites with democratic politics and the backlash against populism. The pendulum swung again when in 1977 democratic politics reasserted itself and both the politicians and the so-called

traditional, illiterate, apolitical voters unseated Mrs Gandhi.

But, then, in the aftermath of the Emergency, we acquired a prime-minister who was avowedly anti-political, who saw all political bargaining as ipso facto immoral and avoidable. Instead of the dirtiness of politics, he ventured personal purity as the cure-all of all political ills of the nation. Mr Morarji Desai was then succeeded by a prime minister who was again a pure politician, avowedly sectoral and openly rural, with a nearly inelastic, parochial support base. And now we have again Mrs Gandhi, who has once tasted the elixir of frozen politics and, in fact, offered the electorate this time the choice of limited politics. And my friend, Dr Raj Krishna, sees in this change an evidence of the immaturity of the Indian electorate.

The dangers of both these positions — the attempt to contain limitless *realpolitik* as immoral and the attempt to avoid a 'guided' or 'limited' democracy which would contain *realpolitik* but freeze the social basis of politics — can hardly be over-emphasised. Gradually, the Indian public is being left with only a vague desire for a few good persons who would provide stable leadership to the country. The other name for this desire, as the analytic and survey-based studies of mass fascism produced by Marx Horkheimer, Erich Fromm, Theodor Adorno and their associates have made us aware over the last thirty years, is the predisposition to accept authoritarianism.

**I** have already suggested that authoritarianism has little to do with traditions. Its roots will have to be sought not in ancient patriarchies and religious orders, as the theorists of progress naively seem to believe, but in the modern world's loss of touch with cultural traditions and in the spirit of modern technology and bureaucracy. Most third world authoritarianism, in fact, is a different mode of handling technology and bureaucracy for the purpose of social change, particularly economic growth and industrialisation. It is actually a part of modernity and a pathology of the modern world-view.

Un Understandably, authoritarianism in the post-colonial societies has rarely come according to the neat formula Leon Trotsky so considerably set forth. The economic crisis of capitalism can hardly be expected to infect in the same way societies which are blatantly pre-capitalist and which, even though increasingly a part of the world economy, now often have powerful support from outside the capitalist world. On the contrary, in many of these societies, such economic crisis has often followed political crisis if the linkage between the two systems is close.

**P**resent-day India threatens to be an excellent example of this reversed relationship. When such a relationship develops, the third world's favourite catch-all pseudo-radical expression, 'inner conflicts within ruling classes as a sign of the decadence and collapse of capitalism,' becomes simultaneously a ploy to hide the poverty of analytic thinking and a means of sanctifying political passivity and collaboration. (Witness the present plight of the Communist Party of India vis-a-vis Dange, its redoubtable chairman of fifteen years.)

Such interpretations claim that the choice in the third world is among different versions of authoritarianism and unless the millennial revolution comes, we shall have to reconcile ourselves to a more moderate or liberal version of a closed polity. Such a position destroys the will to build a humane polity here and now, and helps hide the fact that there are alternative paths to basic social changes even for the third world.

I have already said that authoritarianism has always come to post-colonial societies as a competing 'modern' design for handling a country's social and political ills and its problems of economic growth. In fact, it has been sometimes deliberately, if indirectly, promoted by conservative economic doctrines as a means of duplicating in the third world the early stage of industrialisation in the West. If the West could not develop, the argument goes, without oppressing its masses, without, for instance, making its labour-



ers including children slave in the mills sixteen hours a day, the East too must learn to extract from its masses the same sacrifices, in the name of hard work, discipline and obedience.

Liberalism always has within it an implicit theory of political stages reflecting the western experience. However strongly it may deny this, the deep structure of liberalism assumes that in societies in an earlier stage of economic growth, authoritarianism is, if not inevitable, at least certainly natural. There is only a difference of emphasis in Walt Rostow and Samuel Huntington here, and both at one plane would agree with what comrade Stalin thought and did about economic growth.

It is this larger consciousness which is often reflected in the political idiom of the urban, middle classes in many traditional societies, dependent on — and constantly coming in contact with — the modern world. According to this idiom, authoritarianism is a temporary expedient for seeing a country out of its political and economic crises. It is a powerful, if imperfect and bitter antidote of widespread corruption and political indiscipline — as Mrs Gandhi in her simple-minded way once put it — in the society. Then of course the promised return to democracy is delayed because of ever new challenges posed by right-reactionaries and left adventurists to the central authority or because of external threats. And so on and so forth. We all know the story.

**W**hat is the warning contained in the above analysis for India? If both liberalism and Marxism do not allow us a way out, do we have an option in another concept of a desirable polity?

The first task may be to work out an alternative model of politics, but it is a long-term job. Even if we concentrate on its short-range implications, restoring the damaged image of a political system, as opposed to that of a party, is a difficult task. It needs subtler skills than demagoguery and personal cost-calculation. Even more difficult is to avoid the kind of anti-political personal purity that a

person like Morarji Desai vends as a treatment of fascist tendencies. And after Mrs Gandhi has set her clumsy example during 1975-1977, there is always an alternative scenario for demagogues who might promise to restore both some semblance of 'predictable' politics and a sense of 'purpose' in the Indian polity.

**I** therefore have no policy recommendation to make. However, there is one route which is independent of the honesty and skills of individual politicians and the quality of the magic potions brewed by concerned academics and journalists. It is the experience and vested interests created by thirty years of open politics. Only in this one respect does the self-interest of most Indian politicians converge. I believe that they are calculating enough to know that political and ideological differences are relevant only so long as open politics reigns in Indian society. If the political process itself is arrested, the occupation of our professional politicians will have been gone. Not only will this be true of our de-ideologised micro-Machiavellis but also of our intellectuals — those stratospheric, theory-minded souls who move about at the fringe of our politics, often taking advantage of a complex, multi-ethnic, unorganised society trying to make sense out of a disjunctive representational system.

This is not to say that a few of them will not adjust successfully if authoritarianism comes to India, but most will have lost out. And they will not even know what has hit them. Some organised groups may still do well under the new dispensation — the name of the RSS, to contain whom many a recent crisis has been precipitated in India, immediately comes to my mind as having the best chance of surviving as an unified unity — but the remainder will be as effective as they were under the Emergency. Different rules operate when an open system collapses. Those politicians who think that the ground rules of Indian politics never change may be in for a surprise. If such a day comes, I should like to see who cares about what Madhu Limaye thinks about the RSS, Raj Narain about Kanti Desai, and the CPI about the ubiquitous CIA agents in India.



# The company bahadur wins

O V VIJAYAN

SUBEDAR PANDE of the East India Company's sepoy army has left us extraordinary memoirs. I go back to this precious text in an attempt to understand men who, in civilisational terms, might be considered his legitimate heirs. Subedar Pande believed that white women had feathers, and in all likelihood assumed that they laid eggs. On both sides of the line of battle, in 1857, fought men who believed in the legend of the feathered women. But despite these bafflements, the sepoy loyalists were led by white officers, by a *managerial* cadre,

It is good to remember that neither the Hindu nor the Muslim had any quarrel with the Company over the deprivation of freedom, which they never had to begin with. The Muslim was incensed because there was pig's lard on the cartridges, and the Hindu smarted because Lord Bentinck wouldn't let him burn his brother's widow. The Hindu's grievance was the cold rails laid across his magical forests which violated the ecology of his ghost civilisation. And it was just that, a civilisation once magnificent, but now reduced to memory and self indulgence.



If the pig's lard war had triumphed, then we would have gone on with *Suttee*. So if I were a widow's keeper, I would have been with Subedar Pande. But I would have cast my lot, too, either implicitly or through constructive escalation, with the prison-keepers and the executioners, with those who conducted massacres as delicately as they would an orchestra. And thus in the end would I have made my peace with another kind of historical evil.

One saw the straws in the wind within days of the Janata's investiture. The Janata leadership spoke a language of stasis, a language synthesised out of land-locked dialects, a language stupefied by the spiritual kin of Subedar Pande. Such a language, and through it the people who spoke it, could aspire to nothing better than the radicalism of the savage. When the Jat archetype, Charan Singh, speaks of the village, he does not understand man as a part of nature, nor shows awareness of the benign continuity of the protein systems of this planet. He merely concretizes his stupefaction. The case of the countryside can be taken up only by the Mao Tse-tungs, and to a lesser extent by the Gandhis. Because, it is through science alone that one can transcend science. It is through formidable knowledge that you can correct the navigational errors of science since Galileo.

I am not deriding my civilization, but it would be sacrilege to disrespect its gentle dying. I sense it like an immense and static sunset, dimming imperceptibly, but to those who know its magnificent destiny, dimming relentlessly. Should we decide then to die with it, we should give up the struggle, give up making bad automobiles and waging expensive and dishonest wars, and go out into the great astral reaches out there, to the chant of the *Gita*.

I could, on the contrary, dig in and not give up, and reverently nurse its dying. Then would I perceive its incarnation after incarnation changing and passing, and listen to its ancestral voice which would give me sanity in these new environments of mine. I would listen to it that I may not be overwhelmed by the pocket

calculator but tell myself that here within my frontal brain lobes is going on a magical carnival, and that in my incandescent spine I could fashion marvels far beyond anything dreamt of by cybernetics. I could also feel reassured, remembering that my ancestor, Kanaada, had a vision of the atoms long before Democritus attempted to understand matter. That would help me stand up to fascist geneticists who tell me that I ought to give up since my genes are wearing thin.

But between Kanaada and me lie the sad centuries. If I am to be, I need to fill their chasms with things my race missed — the sciences and the voyages and the daring, and the freedoms the white man used against me. I shall negate none of this, for if I did, the chasms would yawn wider, and the power of my ancestors would be lost to me.

This is my struggle, and my defeats and victories should be judged as a part of it, not judged idly. When I look thus at the demise of the democratic mandate, I cannot miss a sense of relief. Because, the mutineers have lost all over again. They have betrayed the precious trust of freedom given them, which is just as well, because now we shall be forewarned not to make them again the repositories of that trust, because they were stupefied savages clumsily radicalising their stupefaction.

The state is a managerial situation, and Mrs Gandhi understands it more than anybody else. For those who are lost in the stupor of caste, of fads and mystic revivals, there is no management but merely a flux over which they exercise no control. Mrs Gandhi has her Subedar Pandes, but she has herself in command. On the other side there are only Subedar Pandes. Mrs Gandhi has a cynical instrument in all that she has acquired through her western education and exposure. On the other side is the linguistic experience of Hindi which does not even have the conceptual equivalent of *choice*.

The pig's lard war is lost again. The Company has won a second time. This is history, the thing that makes one laugh and cry.



# Constitutional change

SEMINARIST

THE results of the general elections to Parliament in 1980 have posed a great many problems, some foreseen and some unforeseen. A great debate is called for so as to evaluate the circumstances in which the mid term parliamentary poll had to take place and the lessons to be drawn from it. Many of the aspects would raise deep controversies, partisan arguments and furious debate — that is as it should be. But it is time also that we devoted our attention to an important aspect of the matter which is not getting the urgent attention it should — we mean the necessity for amendment of certain provisions of our Constitution so as to safeguard the federal, democratic structure of our nation.

It is true that our Constitution is a very fine document, and that great labour went into the framing of it. It is also true that as once Daphtary, the former Attorney General of India, said, there was nothing much wrong with our Constitution. The only difficulty is that the founding fathers who framed the Constitution presumed that it would be worked by gentlemen. That expectation, however, has been belied and that is why the difficulty has arisen.

Speaking seriously, however, the suggestion that after a course of almost 30 years of the framing of the Constitution, it does need another look is neither irrelevant nor irresponsible. This necessity was felt by the highest of judicial authority in the country when the present sitting Chief Justice, Mr. Justice Y V Chandrachud who, while addressing the Bar Association of India Seminar on 15th December, 1979, stated, 'I have come to believe without mixing logic with sentiment that another look at the Constitution is imperative'. 'Another look', however, does not mean 'another fling'.

Tinkering with the Constitution off and on, depending on the mood of the moment or a passing fancy, is in truth and substance the very negation of the spirit behind constitutional amendments. Amendments to fundamental instruments call for vision and foresight, and have to be conceived selflessly in the sense that they ought not to be made to depend on narrow political considerations. People's welfare, not the future of this or that political group, must determine the need for amendment of the Constitution. It is then alone that any serious effort will ever be made to implement the amendments. Otherwise, words of sound and fury significance can be injected into the framework of the Constitution at the opportune times. When those times pass away, both the letter and the spirit of the amendments are conveniently forgotten.

It is true as one of our greatest judges of the Supreme Court, Mr. Justice H R Khanna, has stated, 'Any proposal to have a second look at the Constitution can be entertained only after deep reflection and serious consideration of the various pros and cons. No proposal for amendment of the Constitution should be lightly countenanced. This does not, however, mean that there is something absolute about the Constitution. A constitution is a human product and like all mortal contrivances it cannot claim absolute perfection'.

There may be many important aspects of the Constitution needing amendment. But in this article we are devoting our attention to those aspects which have immediate relevancy if we wish to safeguard our democratic experiment from being snuffed out. Already one is seeing dangerous trends—a reversion to politics, leading to concentration of power—an



open contemptuous attempt at denigrating all established institutions. The only bulwark against these dangers is to strengthen the forces of participative democracy and encourage diffusion of power.

Baron Montesquieu, the French Jurist, long ago had said, 'When the legislative and executive powers are united in the same persons or body there can be no liberty because apprehensions may arise lest the same monarch or senate should enact tyrannical laws to enforce them in a tyrannical manner' were the power of judging joined with the legislature the life and liberty of the subject would be exposed to arbitrary control, for the judge would then be the legislature. Were it joined to the executive power, the judge might behave with all the violence of an oppressor'. The wisdom of that prophecy is true even today.

**I**n this connection, the first Article which comes to one's mind is Article 356 of the Constitution which permits the President to assume to himself all or any of the functions of the Government of the State and all or any of the powers vested in or exercisable by the Governor. That this power is the very antithesis of federalism and inevitably results in serious controversies between the Centre and the States is proved every time such an action is taken. This happened in 1977 and has happened again in 1980. It is not our purpose to discuss these individual actions of 1977 and 1980, but only to draw attention to a rather basic question whether our Constitution should at all have an article like Article 356.

India is defined in the Constitution to be a Union of States. It is by now well settled that the States are within their defined sphere as plenary as the Central Government. The State Governments are not delegates or agents of the Central Government that they should be removable by the Central Government as if the latter was discharging a temporary employee.

No doubt, for taking action in terms of the Article 356, the President is to be satisfied that the government of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions

of the Constitution. But what exactly does that mean. As we know, over a course of period this power has been used 50 times and every time to suit the exigencies of a political party at the Central level. State Assemblies have been kept in suspension with the avowed object of encouraging defections so that the party at the Centre should be able to name its own party government at the State level.

Thus, in 1969 when the Legislative Assembly of Bihar was suspended and the explanation given was that it was expected that a stable government would be formed soon and hence the Assembly had not been dissolved. This shows complete distortion and perversion of power exercisable under Article 356.

It is interesting to analyse the exercise of this power under Article 356 of the Constitution. During the Nehru period, between 1950 and 1964, President's Rule was imposed on six occasions. The main controversy of course was of Kerala in 1959 which now is universally admitted to have been done not so much at the instance of Jawaharlal Nehru but at the instance of the present Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, who was then the President of the Congress Party. During Shastri's tenure there was only one occasion when President's Rule was imposed. During the 11 years of Mrs Indira Gandhi's tenure, there were 27 occasions when President's Rule was imposed.

**T**his Article is an unhappy legacy from British Rule as Mr Justice Bhagwati in the famous Dissolution case of the State of Rajasthan Versus the Union of India (1977) was forced to lament and said, 'This is indeed very drastic power which if exercised can destroy the constitutional equilibrium between the Union and the State and its potential for harm was recognised even by the Constitution Makers'. One of the members had then said in the Constituent Assembly, 'I have fear which is not based without sufficient consideration that we are gradually and perhaps unconsciously drifting towards dictatorship'.

H N Kunzru, one of the senior members, had also stated that this

power of intervention made the States like District Boards. Dr Ambedkar, the architect of our constitution supporting this provision did share the sentiments of other members and stated that he hoped and expected that this Article would never be called into operation and that it would remain a dead letter. How hopelessly wrong even his expectation was.

It should also be seen that though after the Rajasthan case (1977) theoretically the court can interfere if it finds that the satisfaction of the President is based on absurd, mala-fide or perverse ground, yet in practice it would afford almost no relief, because as the court said, 'It must of course be conceded that in most cases it would be difficult, if not impossible, to challenge the exercise of power under Art 356, Cl (1) even on this limited ground, because the facts and circumstances on which the satisfaction is based would not be known'.

**A**nother unfortunate result is that the Supreme Court has held that it is permissible for the President to dissolve the Assembly without approval by both houses of Parliament and has recognised the anomaly that 'it would be impossible to restore the status quo ante if the proclamation is not approved by both Houses of Parliament, but that is the inevitable consequence flowing from the exercise of the power which the President undoubtedly possesses during the time that the proclamation is in force'. In keeping with the principle of federalism, this anachronism of the President taking over the administration of the States should be deleted. If there is activity which is anti-national there is enough power in the Centre to interfere by sending armed forces.

But, short of such a breakdown, the trumpeted charge of maladministration in the States is no reason to permit trespass on State autonomy. If we can live with maladroitness and inflation and breakdown of law and order in Delhi, we can live with it in the States. Even if the question of deletion of Article 356 needs further debate, this Article should at least be immediately amended by



providing that no action for dissolution of the Assembly will take place until the proclamation has been approved by both Houses of Parliament, otherwise we will have the physical and spiritual perversion of Article 356 when the President dissolved the Assemblies even in the face of an adverse vote recorded earlier — at the time of discussion on the motion of thanks to the President where it had indicated its disapproval of such action

We cannot also see any difficulty in the practical working if the power of dissolution is not given to the President until the proclamation is approved. In that case the Assembly, during the proclamation, may be kept under suspension so that if the proclamation is not approved the House can be revived and mandate of the Constitution be honoured

Connected with this aspect is another provision which needs to be incorporated in the Constitution, that is the time gap between the dissolution of the Assembly and the holding of the fresh election. We find that it is now a matter which is left to be determined by the political bosses at the Centre to serve its own convenience. This gap can lead to disastrous economic and psychological consequences for the country. We should have a provision that the gap between the dissolution and fresh election should not be more than 45 days. The Election Commission is a permanent body and it has no justification not to have the electoral rolls ready at any point of time so as to be able to hold elections within a period of six weeks. Such a provision would also avoid the unseemly and unfortunate debate that has been going on about the action of the President in dissolving the Parliament in 1979, without allowing the claim of Jagjivan Ram and the Janata Party being in a majority to be tested in the House. It may be mentioned that in the Constitution of the 5th Republic of France, Article 12 provides that after dissolution general elections must be held within at least 21 days and at the most within 40 days

adopted the British system of voting where a person who gets the highest vote is declared elected notwithstanding the fact that he may be in a minority of the total vote cast. The number of parties and candidates are responsible for such a situation. We have to face the fact that our country will never have a two party system like that of England. The peculiar development in England has not been repeated in Europe

It is well known that there are a number of parties in France, Germany and other European countries and it is common to have a coalition government of various political parties. We mistakenly feel that a coalition government is an evil for which there is no logic. The dangerous result of such thinking leads the mass of people to vote for an apparently strong one party and one leader even though both may stand for authoritarianism. Coalition government is not an evil, as a matter of fact it is inevitable in our country as it is inevitable in large parts of the continent of Europe. If that be the situation, and as the present election has shown that only 42.5 per cent of the votes polled, gave the Congress-I 2/3 of the seats in the Lok Sabha, something urgently needs to be done.

This result has followed because our voting system denies representation to large segments of the population. The very system of voting needs to be seriously changed. There are different systems of voting in various European countries. However, to us there are two methods available, one of which could be adopted with good results. The first is a multi-member constituency and the other is a system of cumulative voting. In a multi-member constituency what happens is that a voter has only one vote while the constituency has to elect a number of candidates.

To give an illustration, if Delhi with six general seats was a multi-member constituency, each member would only have one vote. The result would be that as there are about 42 lakhs voters and as only 50 per cent normally go to the polls, the effective voting strength would be 21 lakhs. If, therefore, out of a total voting electorate, some groups could concentrate on one candidate instead of

having to disperse their votes, we would have more genuine representation of Delhi's population in Parliament. Thus, labour could concentrate on one representative and the labour voters whether in South Delhi or North Delhi could combine for one candidate. In that way, they would be able to send their representative and thus break the monopoly of the bosses of the political parties.

A similar situation occurs where there is cumulative voting within a multi-member constituency. There a person can give all his votes for one candidate. To take the above illustration, in Delhi each voter would have six votes which he could cast for one candidate or divide his votes as he likes. By so doing, we would disperse the concentration of power which is a certain safeguard against authoritarian trends in the society.

In West Germany there is a mixed system of voting. Half the members are elected directly in single member constituencies and the other half by the list system by which the voters vote for the list. This permits the party to put on the list those candidates who may not want to enter the arena but still are willing to do public service if given a chance.

Another very sorry spectacle that we see is the fate of the findings of a large number of Enquiry Commissions which have been appointed not only by the last government but even previously. It has normally happened that after a great deal of public criticism against the conduct of ministers, the State Government or the Central Government have appointed commissions of enquiry. A great deal of trouble and hard work goes in the preparation of reports which have indicted the ministers and other public officials. But notwithstanding the Shah Commission, the Maruti Report, the Grover Panel, the Khanna Report (Le Pamak) and the Changanu report (Le Badal), others including Indira/Sanjay are back to the power thus making a mockery of the findings of the Commissions which were headed by either a sitting or retired Supreme Court Judge. So embarrassing is the situation that in future no self respecting Judge would accept such an assignment unless an assurance was given that its findings

Another serious matter which has come to light and has also been noticed previously is the basic defect in our voting procedure. We have



would be accepted by the government.

This situation has unfortunately arisen because there is no mechanism by which those findings can be made effective. The only thing that might happen is to initiate criminal proceedings which are withdrawn the moment a sympathetic political party comes back to power. This mutual accommodation by all political parties may suit them. But the people of India are ill served by such a glass being put over corruption. Why is the Vaidyalingam report not pursued—obviously because if the government does that how will it avoid a follow up on the Maruti and Shah Commission Reports. How is it that the Jaguar deal was suspected during Morarji's time and is free from blame during Indira's time. Cannot people expect honesty and consistency from politicians. Must the people be treated as of no consequence.

**W**e feel that after the finding of a Commission headed by a retired or a sitting Supreme Court Judge where a minister has abused his official position or has engaged in conduct unbecoming of him, the minimum that should follow is that such a person should be disqualified for being chosen or for remaining a member of either the legislative assembly or the Lok Sabha for a period of six years, the normal period provided for in case of disqualification under the Representation of Peoples' Act for corrupt practices. One of the devices adopted by those holding public office who were indicted before the Commission is not to participate in the proceedings before the Commission and then to make a grievance that the decisions are ex-parte. Now this is a ploy because the absence is of their own choosing. But as no consequences follow, they indulge in it without any difficulty.

In order to stop this perversion of public life, the law should provide that if a party has been given notice and even if he does not participate in the enquiry proceedings, the findings will be binding on him and adverse findings will result in disqualification. Such a provision was made by an amendment to the Representation of Peoples' Act in Jammu and Kashmir. Thus we had

the curious anomaly that B. Ghulam Mohammad could not fight the Assembly election in Jammu and Kashmir but he was able to contest the Parliament seat because there was no amendment made in the Representation of Peoples' Act which is a Central Act. Such an amendment cannot be objected to on the ground that proof before the Commission is not of the same magnitude as that before a criminal trial.

We are surprised that such a question should be posed. Ministers should not equate themselves with criminals. Ministers like Caesar's wife are expected to be above suspicion. In the case of a minister, suspicion and not proof of his misconduct should be enough to rule him out of public life. As rightly observed by Sir Ivor Jennings, on Cabinet Government, 'the most elementary qualification demanded of a minister is honesty and incorruptibility. It is, however, necessary not only that he should possess this qualification but also that he should appear to possess it'. The minister cannot be allowed to hide behind the civil servants' trousers or saree. He should be bold enough to say, as Lord Morrison said, in Government and Parliament 'the proper answer of the minister is that if the House wants anybody's head it must be his head as the responsible minister'.

Whatever aspects that may be put forth against passing a law of defection, surely the least that can be done is that a person who changes his political party will not be eligible for any office of minister, deputy minister or Parliamentary secretary during the term of Assembly/Parliament. At least this will stop the Bhajan Lal's from being added to the political dictionary like Aya Ram Gaya Ram.

**A**nother amendment required to be made in the Constitution is that no person shall be a Prime Minister for more than two terms. The U.S.A. has permitted a maximum of two terms for the President. It is somehow wrongly imagined that the President of the U.S.A. is more powerful than the Prime Minister of India. It can happen that the President in the U.S.A. who heads the Executive, may not have the majority in the Senate, or the House of Representa-

tives. It has been seen that even if his party is in majority in the Senate it may not vote for all policies sponsored by him. This flows from the concept of total separation of the executive and legislative wings.

**I**n India the position is the other way around where the head of the executive is also the leader of the majority party in the Parliament, and where under compulsion the members of the party have to vote for the programme put forth by the executive. That is why the danger pointed out by Montesquieu is graver here. We cannot for obvious reasons have any other system excepting the parliamentary form of government, as that alone is suited to our past and genius and the variety and the size of our country. But the danger of constitutional dictatorship must be understood. One way (however effective experience alone will tell) is to limit the Prime Minister to two terms in office. We in this country are quick to prostrate before existing authority and also to withdraw our loyalty from past rulers. May be that that trait, not so complimentary to us might help avoid absolutism, if amendments like the above are pushed through.

These are some aspects which need to be adopted for the welfare of the country. Unless this is done, the danger is that people may fall into a mood of pessimism which was once voiced by the famous writer, Albert Camus, 'At a certain level of injustice and suffering no one can do anything for anyone'.

Sometimes it pains one to note that the intellectuals and others, instead of meeting the issues in a bold manner, seek to retire and cover their cowardice by taking the stand that politics has become a dirty arena which clean people cannot enter. We feel that this approach ill-befits a vibrant democracy. Every person in the society and much more a person who claims to have the social good of the people at heart, owes a duty to give shoulder to the wheel otherwise, as the famous Mr. Justice Oliver Holmes of America, said as far back as 1884, 'I think that as life is action, it is required of a man that he should share the pains and actions of his time at peril of being judged not to have lived'.



# Communist power

BHABANI SEN GUPTA

COMMUNIST power in India is still relatively small, but it is no longer insignificant. The communists rule in three States in alliance with left and 'democratic' factions. Before the dissolution of nine State assemblies on February 17, the communists had legislative presence, albeit slender, in eight States. In 15 States the Communist Party organisation reaches down to the block level. This cannot be said of any bourgeois party in India except the Congress-I. Besides, the political influence of the communists is far greater than their ruling power. They control large segments of organised industrial workers and rural poor, and have considerable political clout among white collar employees.

Indeed, Indian communists, being ruling and non-ruling parties at the same time, belong to a specific category of communist parties that operate mostly in the industrialised capitalist States — Italy, France and Japan. The strategic and tactical advantages of being in power and in opposition at the same time are greater in a developing country like India than in an industrialised country like Italy or France. In India, the communists can use, and have used, ruling power — however limited — to expand their support bases, especially among the village poor, and to embellish their image among the urban middle class.

Communist power in India must also be seen in the context of the balance of forces in the wider world. Nearly one-third of the world's population, or some 1.3 billion, live in countries ruled by communists. Of the 16 communist States, the nine in Europe are more or less industrially advanced nations. Of the seven

others, six are in Asia and one in Latin America. Besides these 16 communist party ruled States, six others, four in Africa and two in Asia, are ruled by self-proclaimed Marxists, with strong linkages with the Soviet Union. These 22 nations constitute one-seventh of the international community of more than 150 sovereign States, it is a most powerful minority that challenges the world dominance of capitalism.

Significantly, the proliferation of communist nations has occurred during the period of diversity and polycentrism of world communism. To the east European communist estate born out of World War II (of which only Mongolia was a lone Asian appendage in 1945), Czechoslovakia (1948), and China (1949) were added when world communism was an unquestioned monolith. The vast extension of the global communist estate in the developing continents of Asia and Africa, has taken place *after* the collapse of the monolith. Fidel Castro proclaimed Cuba a communist State in 1960 when the monolith had begun to crack but had not exactly collapsed.

In India, too, communist power has expanded significantly *after* the 1964 split of the CPI. The split created two mutually *competitive* communist factions, compelled the CPI-M to turn to the rural proletariat of Bengal to seek a stable support base, introduced a new dynamism to communist politics which now tried to keep pace with the increasing dynamism of Indian politics, and, last but not the least, helped Indian communism emerge as an independent revolutionary movement making its own tactical decisions within the framework of its own strategic goals,



and trying to apply Marxism-Leninism to the highly complex and increasingly volatile Indian social, political and cultural realities

The state of global communist power creates opportunities as well as slippages and hazards for communist power in India, perhaps more hazards than opportunities during the present period. The fact that as many as eight Asian-African countries have gone communist or come under Marxist regimes during the decade of the seventies (the three Indochina States, Yemen and Afghanistan in Asia, and Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia in Africa) illustrates (dramatises) the deepening crises of the world capitalist system, threatening the sprawling raw-materials-producing, underdeveloped rear of international capitalism. Thus, the current confrontation between the USSR and the United States is, quite openly, over the third world interests of the world capitalist powers strained by the swelling tide of radical, leftwing or indigenous Marxist nationalism aided by Soviet military power. (It is to be noted that although the global communist monolith has broken down, and there are now many communisms in the world, no communist or Marxist regime is hewn to Peking, nor does the Chinese Communist Party direct any major communist movement outside China, however, several major communist parties and some communist/Marxist regimes are keen on keeping on good terms with the Chinese People's Republic.)

**T**he deepening crises of the world capitalist system affects India which is one of the leading capitalist countries in the third world. The multiple stresses and strains through which the Indian political system (and Indian economy) has been passing since the 70s offer the communist forces opportunities to expand their support bases and their overall influence on the political process. However, the dynamics of unpredictable change demands of leaderships of the two communist factions tactical virtuosités and organisational capabilities that would strain the resources of far stronger communist parties and movements. Indeed, at the beginning of the 1980s, political opportunities tantalising Indian com-

munist would seem to be more than their logistical and tactical capabilities of coping with it.

The thickening confrontation between the US and the USSR in the third world also creates opportunities and problems for Indian communists at the same time. The disappearance of the historical buffers in the South Asian region — Tibet and Afghanistan — brings the grim Sino-Soviet geopolitical struggle closer to home, India today stands a greater risk of getting involved, however unwittingly in this struggle than ever before. Attitudes and policies of the different bourgeois elements in India with regard to specific manifestations of the Sino-Soviet conflict are likely to influence the communists' relationships with them. The conflict also will continue to stand in the way of reunion of the two Indian communist factions, as the CPI-M leader, Promode Dasgupta, made clear on February 28. It broke the united CPI into two in 1964.

**R**esponses to, and manipulation of, regional manifestations of the Sino-Soviet conflict will prove to be crucial for communist power in India if the conflict escalates and threatens to suck this country in. With all its similarities with communist power in Italy, France and Japan, Indian communism is part of the communist movement in the agrarian, underdeveloped third world. Third world communism has far stronger linkages with the CPSU and the CPC than communism in the industrialised capitalist countries. The CPI-M is the third world's only significant communist group that regards itself independent of the two communist giants and has no organisational links with either. This independence has helped the CPI-M enhance its attraction for the literate Indian middle class. The CPI, on the other hand, has strong links with the CPSU, and is at this time divided on the issue of following the Moscow line.

The Marxists, however, have not criticised Soviet foreign policy except certain aspects of Soviet policies about India, in contrast, it has differed strongly from, and condemned, several foreign policy decisions of the Chinese People's Republic, especially

those affecting countries geographically close to India. The CPI, on the other hand, has stood firmly behind Moscow in its pervasive conflict with Peking.

Of late, however, the leadership of the CPI has been trying to separate domestic politics from India's relations with the USSR, it continues to oppose the Congress-I regime in New Delhi and will presumably fight the Congress-I in the coming State elections despite the high-level friendship existing between Moscow and the government of Indira Gandhi. If the two communist groups continue to remain in opposition to Congress-I, while supporting its foreign policy, the communists will, in effect, return to their tactical line of the mid-fifties. However, the risk of incurring the wrath of the ruling segments of the Indian bourgeoisie will continue to haunt the communists if they find themselves at any time supporting an external communist power locked in hostility with the Indian government. In other words, what happened to the CPI-M in the wake of the Sino-Indian border war may happen once again to communist power in India. A policy of selective support and selective criticism stemming from an independent stance appears to be one of the basic requirements of communist power extension in India in the coming years.

**A**n anatomy of communist power in India must begin with an appreciation of the Marxist-Leninist concept of political power and the position of parliamentary politics in the Marxist-Leninist tactics to capture political power. The Marxian analysis perceives political power in a bourgeois-capitalist society dialectically. On the one hand, political power stems from definite prevailing economic relations. On the other hand, the attempt of those who wield political power to stabilise and consolidate the economic relationships from which power is derived, provokes counter-tendencies. These counter-tendencies first manifest themselves as competitive economic behaviour. As technical knowledge increases, they take the form of mutations in the means and organisation of production and in the productive forces in general, gradually transforming the whole economic basis, and



thereby the foundations of the prevailing political power. Revolutions occur when the economic foundations of the ruling class, already undermined by these changes, begins to crumble. Then it requires only the élan of a new political elite, clamouring for power, to overthrow the ruling class and to usurp its place.

Marx applied this schematic analysis of the transfer of power on the basis of economic factors to societies of all times and of all places. History thus becomes the history of class struggle. The Marxian notion of power is closely bound to Marx's understanding of the proletarian revolution brought about by the class struggle in capitalist societies. The transfer of power in a proletarian revolution is no longer, according to Marx, an instance of one minority group seizing power from another minority group (which is the process until the proletarian revolution) — this is an irreversible transfer of power from a minority to the majority of the people — a transfer which occurs only once in the course of history.

The question of the use of revolutionary force for the transfer of political power to the proletariat — whether a communist-led revolution is to be violent or 'peaceful' — preoccupied Lenin more than Marx and Engels. For Marx and Engels, the essence of phenomena like exploitation, subjugation, enslavement, human alienation and so on is force (*Gewalt*). In order to overcome the forces of the rulers, the growing power of the working class expresses itself in revolutionary force. Hence for Marx and Engels, force, 'the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one', is the ultimate form of the law-governed character of history.

The question of the use of revolutionary force was examined by Lenin *empirically* in the crucible of revolutionary seizure of power. In the closing years of the 19th century, Lenin found that there were two ways in which the proletariat could capture political power: the peaceful democratic way, and the way of revolutionary violence. After the Russian revolution of 1905, Lenin developed a formula which is still valid in

communist thinking all over the world: 'the use by the people of force against those who use force against the people'. In other words, whether a revolution would be peaceful or violent would depend on the behaviour of the ruling class.

Lenin's other modification of Marx's theories of the proletarian revolution was the alliance he formed in Russia of the industrial working class and peasants. Lenin brought peasants to the revolutionary proletariat, but kept the leadership of the revolution with the working class. The communist revolutions since the Bolshevik revolution have occurred almost entirely in agrarian societies, with peasants forming the backbone of communist power.

Marx acknowledged the historical possibility of communist seizure of power through the parliamentary process although he was doubtful about its probability. Engels who witnessed the great electoral successes won by the social democrats in Germany despite severe persecution, was more sympathetic about the possibilities of parliamentary action. Engels declared in 1895 that 'rebellion in the old style, street fighting with barricades, which decided the issue everywhere up to 1848,' had become obsolete. The development of sophisticated weapons, the laying out of wide avenues, the growing interests of the bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie had altered the situation in Europe. Engels declared that the successful exploitation of universal suffrage constituted a new form of class struggle and predicted further success of this struggle. An observation of Engels in 1895, in his introduction to Marx's *The Class Struggle in France*, is strikingly relevant to the tactical line of the CPI-M today: 'The irony of world history turns everything upside down,' observed Engels. 'We, the "revolutionists", the "overthrowers" — we are thriving far better on legal methods than on illegal methods and overthrow.'

Lenin's view of the parliamentary process as an instrument of revolutionary seizure of power, conditioned as it was by the greatly inhibited Russian experience of parliamentary politics, was less optimistic than

Engels. He recognised that 'from the standpoint of world history', parliamentary struggles could enable communists to capture power, and he decried the slogan of some of the German communists that parliament had become 'historically obsolete'. But Lenin also stressed the 'historical limitations and conventional nature of the bourgeois parliamentary system'. For Lenin, communists must make use of the *parliamentary class struggle*, but they must also be prepared for non-parliamentary confrontation with the bourgeoisie-in-power.

The political power that the communists flaunt in India in 1980 is entirely the result of parliamentary politics. The social roots of this power reach deep into the rural classes in the case of the CPI-M, while, for the CPI, they are mostly confined to urban workers and middle classes. The geographical reach of the power, as noted, is limited to three of the smallest States in India, though one of them, West Bengal, is part of the country's industrial hub. The combined CPI-CPI-M share of the valid votes in the last three parliamentary elections has remained short of 10%. It was 8.66% in 1980, 7.06% in 1977, and 9.81% in 1971. The 1980 communist vote has not been far short of the Lok Dal's share of 9.45%. In fact, the communist vote in 1971 was larger than that of the Jan Sangh (7.39%), and more than double the combined voting share of Swatantra (3.12%), SSP (2.44%) and PSP (1.03%).

The political power of the CPI-M is stronger and deeper in West Bengal and Tripura than in Kerala, but even in the two eastern States it is not absolutely secure, in spite of its largely autonomous character. The autonomy stems from the durable support base the Marxists have built among the poorer sections of the peasantry: this is the base that kept them alive and strong despite the bleak political wilderness of 1971-76. The insecurity comes from the overwhelming power of the party now ruling at the Centre and likely to rule in most of the States after the coming State-level poll. The CPI, on the other hand, has little autonomous political power of its own. Its electoral fortunes are governed by the



alliances it may forge with other political groups

**A** communist party and communist movement must always operate simultaneously at two class levels — the urban and rural proletariat, which constitutes its own class base, and the bourgeoisie, the class enemy. As long as a communist movement has to operate in a stable and strong capitalist society, with the bourgeoisie firmly entrenched in power, tactical relations with the parties of the bourgeoisie (in single-party States or dictatorships, with the institutions and concentrations of bourgeois power) must necessarily preoccupy the leadership of the communist movement.

In India, the fragmentation of the bourgeoisie into mutually competing and conflicting political factions makes it easier for communists to penetrate the ranks of the class enemy and intensify its intra-class conflicts. Whether Indian communists cooperate or conflict with this or that faction of the bourgeoisie, their tactical objective must always be to weaken the political hegemony of the bourgeoisie and promote the political strength of the revolutionary forces.

In India, the communists have been trying the parliamentary path since the 50s to enhance their political fortunes. The limitations and seductions of the parliamentary path have not spared the CPI, especially during the period when it sought a tactical alliance with the dominant bourgeois party, the ruling Congress. Empirical evidence shows that no communist party can gain much, and each communist party stands to lose much, if it aligns itself with the class enemy except from its own impregnable position of strength. Students of communist affairs have come to the conclusion that in a capitalist parliamentary democracy, *a communist party must establish a stable hold on 25 per cent of the vote before it can make its isolation from the political process impossible except through anti-democratic, repressive means.* This is where the Italian Communist Party stands today, with the French party just one step's remove. In India, it is well nigh impossible to exclude the communists from the

political process in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura.

The CPI-M has shown some ability to make Leninist use of parliamentary tactics, the vast expansion of the Marxist base in Bengal and Tripura has been built to some extent with the help of what Lenin called 'parliamentary class struggle'. In 1968-71, the Marxists, operating through the united front government in West Bengal, put through an agrarian policy the main objective of which was to mobilise the poorer sections of the peasantry *politically* with a view to alter the balance of social forces in the countryside. The modified version of that agrarian policy, implemented in West Bengal since 1977, has further consolidated the Marxist rural base. While the CPI-M can be expected to stick to its govern-cum-mobilise tactical line in its own relatively small political estate, its tactical line with regard to the bourgeoisie is less stable if only because the political forces of the bourgeoisie are passing through a protracted process of reshuffle.

**A**ssuming that the CPI-M and the CPI continue to work together, the power of Indian communists will be employed in the next few years to achieve three primary tactical objectives to further extend, deepen and consolidate the communist support base and elevate this base steadily from an electoral to a political level, to weaken the main party of the bourgeoisie, the Congress-I, and, therefore, to forge different types of compacts with the bourgeois groups fighting the party led by Indira Gandhi. It can be stated with a measure of certainty that these objectives will motor the CPI-M tactical lines although mistakes could be made even within the orbits of the main tactics, as mistakes were made (and confessed) even in 1979. The CPI may return to the earlier line of allying with the ruling Congress, although this analyst does not believe that this will happen. He would therefore expect the power of Indian communists to be used in the coming years mainly for the achievement of the three tactical objectives noted above.

Simultaneously, communist power will be deployed, in the three States where it prevails, to *demonstrate* that,

even within the severe limitations imposed by the Constitution, communists can govern better than the bourgeois parties, and they alone can advance and protect the well being of the exploited and the downtrodden. This political line is different from the controversial West European concept of 'ministerial socialism', its main thrust (especially for the CPI-M) is mobilisation and struggle against the principal battlements of the bourgeoisie.

The political line, however, has three major implications for the communists in implementing it, they operate as partners of Indian democracy, their political fortunes cannot take any great leap forward except in the ambience of total decay of the prevailing political system and a much more *intensified and enduring* struggle for power among the different bourgeois factions, and, finally, there is the risk of extremist radical movements springing up with the same impact on the entire communist movement as the bloody conflict between Marxists and Naxalites, and the suppressive measures taken against both, had on the movement during 1970-72.

**T**he intensity of the conflict between communist power and the power of the leading faction of the bourgeoisie will depend on the state of political relationship existing between the two. Neither communist group wants a confrontation relationship between the two powers. The relative weakness of the communist position makes a direct polarisation with the main bourgeois force undesirable. It is therefore in the interest of communist power that, at least at the State level, India is governed by a plurality of political parties. If this happens in the coming State elections, communist power will join forces with the power of the non-Congress-I factions to limit the power of the Congress-I. Political battles will be fought better for the communists if they can fight the leading bourgeois force in alliance with the smaller bourgeois forces.

The ambience will change if the Congress-I recaptures all the States that will be going to the polls and then comes down heavily on the three ruled by the communists.



Whether Indian communism will remain committed to the democratic, parliamentary path or will become militant, violent, and oriented to non-parliamentary ways of capturing power will depend more on the fortunes of Indian democracy and on the political style of the bourgeoisie in power than on unilateral choices of the communists themselves. The communists now are full-throated champions of parliamentary democracy, the main target of their political attack is bourgeois authoritarianism. If those in power block the parliamentary path for the communists, the movement will necessarily chart other methods.

**W**hat these methods will be lies in the gray zone of speculation. The last decade has enriched the political experience of the communists as much as it has of the other political forces and of the country as a whole. The Naxalism that sprouted in the late sixties and early seventies is not likely to be tried again until more peaceful methods have been convincingly exhausted. Revolutionaries are not burnt with the death wish, they want to win and change the world. The Chinese Communist Party is neither willing to sponsor, nor capable of sponsoring, another Maoist movement in India, if Indian political contingencies drive the communists to take to armed struggle, it will be an Indian movement fashioned by indigenous strategic and tactical thinking. Armed struggle can be waged only from secure bases in the rural areas, and only with the willing and active participation and support of large segments of the peasantry.

The Naxalite movement has had several lessons for Indian communists. In the first place, it has brought home the grave difficulties of waging armed peasant struggles against the raj in India, but it has, at the same time, shown that this type of struggle is possible. Secondly, the majority of rural based cadres of both communist factions no longer rule out the possibility of armed struggle although they hope that this will not be necessary. Subjective openness to the possibility of armed struggle is probably the main dividing line between the older and younger (under-40) leaders and cadres of Indian communism. However, there is no evidence that

concrete tactical thinking on the probability of armed struggle and its likely characteristics in Indian conditions has been attempted at any level in the CPI-M, not to speak of the CPI.

**B**ut it has engaged some of the erstwhile Naxalite groups during the last two years. They have been trying to fathom concrete requirements and implications of armed struggle, finding, in that process, that much of the Maoist methodology is not applicable to India. Recent formulations of some of the former Naxalite theoreticians acknowledge that a collapse of the bourgeoisie's ability to govern is a precondition for organised militancy of the agrarian and industrial proletariat. Cultural and logistical problems inhibiting armed peasant struggle are now faced more realistically than in the heady days of the brief Naxalite upsurge.

If peasant militancy becomes the mainspring of communist power in India, it will probably resemble the peasant struggles in Southern Italy under the leadership of communists than the Maoist or Vietnamese models which, to be sure, were motored by combinations of anti-imperialist and anti-feudal armed struggles. The main question, however, is whether communist power in India will be allowed to operate and seek to expand its share of government in a climate of democracy and free and fair elections. If this happens, there is a fair possibility of the success of a parliamentary class struggle in India unless, of course, India is involved in a fateful war with either of its big communist neighbours.

If, on the other hand, India's bourgeois democracy ends up in a bourgeois authoritarian State, the revolutionary forces will confront the force of the ruling class with their own force, and the mainstay of the revolutionary force can only be the peasants. The scenario is too 'iffy' to lend itself to realistic analysis. But India and the world have just passed through the century's most revolutionary decade to face what may turn out to be an even more convulsive aftermath. Things may change very fast and very abruptly in India, in the region, and in the world.



# Military structures

M L THAPAN

THOUGH few outside the army are aware of it, the nation owes a deep debt of gratitude to the first Indian Commander-in-Chief, General Carriappa, for keeping the army well clear of politics. In doing so, he not only upheld a long tradition which was inherited from the undivided Indian Army; he also fostered it. This was done at a moment in time when the army was prey to strong political influence, by the only political party which mattered — the Indian National Congress and, to a lesser extent, the Indian Communist Party. These were the external forces, against whose attempts to politicise the Army, General Carriappa put up a resolute front.

There were also, inside the army, elements anxious to demonstrate their nationalism to the political leadership, in their zeal for rapid advancement. Many alleged victimisation at the hands of the British for their display of nationalistic fervour, though it was difficult to reconcile their claims to talent against their actual performance during the second world war, which had only just concluded, and which was as good a testing ground for soldiers of all nationalities, as any professional could hope for the best. He kept these fractious elements in check

by enforcing discipline and by setting high standards of professional competence, against which all aspirants to advancement were to be measured. Only by his firm refusal to allow political pressure to override professional judgment, was he able to keep the army free to devote its energies to its main function, that of defending the country.

The foundations of good government in a democracy are laid in the relationship which should exist between the political leadership on the one hand, and the public servant, on the other. The political leadership is responsible for the formulation of policy and the public servant, for its execution. Now, policy cannot be framed in a vacuum, it must take into account practical realities, administrative implications, and its impact on other areas of national life.

This calls for two desiderata, firstly a full grasp of the subject and not merely political predilection and, secondly, the capacity to discuss its implications frankly with those charged with its implementation before it is launched. Unless there is a meaningful dialogue between the political head and the public servant, at the policy formulation stage and, thereafter, at regular intervals during



its execution, the end result will be predictable failure

The second requirement of non-interference in the day to day administration, which falls in the sphere of the public servant, is equally important. No government servant can be expected to discharge his duties if he receives contradictory directions from sources other than the established chain of authority. It does not require a great deal of introspection to determine whether we have adhered to these basic principles of good government in the past.

In dealing with matters of defence, we come up against two additional shortcomings. One is abysmal ignorance of what constitutes the ramifications of physical security and the hard conditions of service in the Armed Forces, which must be experienced personally before one can order their affairs; and the other, the aura of excessive secrecy which clouds all discussion of defence. The second often provides a convenient cloak for the first. Here the politician and the civil servant are on common ground, for whilst neither has any pretensions towards first hand knowledge, this does not preclude them from occupying the driving seat of the defence omnibus, whilst at rest. It does seem strange that, living as we do in an age of growing specialisation where services such as the Railways and the Posts and Telegraphs are administered by boards of professional managers, all of whom have come up the hard way, the defence services headquarters continue to run as 'attached offices' of the Union Ministry of Defence.

It is of interest to study the higher organisation of defence in our country. The official Report of the Ministry of Defence presented annually to Parliament states that 'the supreme responsibility for national defence rests with the Cabinet. All important questions relating to defence are dealt with by the Committee on Political Affairs'. The membership of this Committee is not fixed and is determined by the Prime Minister from time to time. The Defence Minister has periodically served on this Committee, but this has not

always been so. Nor do the Chiefs of Staff collectively now have direct access to the Cabinet. These are serious omissions which could have grave consequences.

The Report then goes on to say what is the composition of Committees 'assisting' the Minister of Defence, the organisation of the Ministry and the three Services Headquarters. The Report makes no mention of the mode of coordination between the various agencies of the Ministry, there is no institutional set up such as a Chief of Defence Staff, or Army, Navy or Air Force Councils, and business is transacted through the well worn colonial legacy of notings on files, supplemented during crises by meetings of committees.

The President of India is also designated as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, but this designation is only titular, and he has no executive operational functions. Defence procurement and production is vested in the Ministry of Defence; the executive heads of the three Services do not exercise any direct control, other than indicating their requirements of defence equipment and material and relentlessly, if tiresomely, pursuing their procurement. As an instrument for speedy action, which security considerations demand, it is clumsy and ponderous.

The principle of accountability is nowhere in sight, as responsibility is diffused over numerous departments within the ministry, as well as other ministries at the Centre, with the burgeoning of State control of industry. It is a tribute to certain dedicated persons who have manned key positions in this apparatus, during periods of active hostilities, that it has delivered the goods, but it is certain that it would not stand up to the test of protracted war.

It is a belief, held by some, that leadership belongs to the leisured class. One may debate the relevance of this belief in an egalitarian society, but there is no gainsaying the fact that a leader must have time to think. If the political head of a ministry is immersed in his political problems, such as nursing his constituency, polishing his political profile and pushing his fan mail — mainly 'sifarish', or anony-

mous, pseudonymous and from disgruntled individuals — or the like, he has little time left for matters of greater import. Now that we have a new government in office at the Centre, may one make a plea on behalf of the armed forces?

Firstly, let us have a minister who understands defence and who is sympathetic to the needs of his charge. There is no finer body of men in the country today, men who have always had a national purpose and who need no National or Emotional Integration Council to guide them, men who are ever ready to respond to the call of duty and who, by their supreme sacrifice in the past and whenever the future so demands, live and die in the hope that the unity and territorial integrity of their country shall never be challenged. These men need only the finest that the political leadership can offer, the political lightweights should be accommodated elsewhere.

Secondly, the minister so appointed, if he has no first hand knowledge of service conditions, should take urgent steps to familiarise himself with his new surroundings. Many politicians feel that this is best done by clutching a microphone and addressing the troops, a familiar enough act during election time, but one which cuts no ice with men in uniform. Krishna Menon, when Defence Minister, went one better and gave long orations in English, which went straight over the soldiers' heads. What is needed is a sense of identification and partnership, which can only come about by visiting Services' units at daily work and play, attendance at major exercises and manoeuvres and sharing their hazards in inhospitable locations.

A man's education is never complete. A receptive minister will learn more about his charge in this manner than he would by pouring over files in a stuffy, airconditioned office. Basil Liddell Hart recalls in his *Memoirs* that Leslie Hore-Belisha, who was appointed Secretary of State for War in Neville Chamberlain's government just before the outbreak of the second world war, was one of the most dynamic War Ministers Britain had ever had.



There was little he did not know of what went on in the British Army, and he learnt it all by personal investigation

Thirdly, the government must take steps to see that the Annual Defence debate in Parliament is made more purposeful. In the past, it has tended to be a monologue, with hardly any participation by members. By tradition, Service Officers are not aspirants for membership of Parliament after their retirement and, in any case, the costs of election, as Independent members, are outside their reach. The presence of a few senior retired officers would do much to enliven the Defence debate, and to provide food for thought to the government. There will then be presentation of different points of view, which cannot but be helpful to government in formulating defence policy. There already exists provision in the Constitution for the nomination of members of Parliament to represent certain interests, could this not be enlarged to include at least one distinguished member from amongst those who have retired, of each Armed Service?

Lastly, what can be done about the attitude of utter indifference of the public towards defence? A former financial adviser to the Minister for Defence has succinctly described it as 'exuberantly sympathetic in war and somnolently apathetic in peace'. The government can help by a judicious review of the security classification of subjects of defence, particularly those which have ceased to have any topical significance, or those on whom full literature is available from open sources. But the real effort must come from the people themselves. If they prefer to read the vast quantum of indigestible political journalism, currently churned out by our press and publishers, there is little that anyone can do. They must then be content to remain militarily illiterate. They would have in their company, an undistinguished former Governor of a State, who wondered how a year of study could be spent at the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, by middle level officers of the three Services if, so far as he imagined, they were being drilled on the parade square all the time. Period



# Books

## **CPI(M): PROMISES, PROSPECTS, PROBLEMS**

by Bhabani Sen Gupta Young Asia Publications,  
New Delhi-Stockholm, 1979

IS the CPI(M) 'the wave of the future' in Indian politics? This is a relevant question today for three reasons. First, the ruling Congress(I) stands on a fragile foundation. Second, the non-communist opposition parties like the Janata Party, Lok Dal and Congress(U) are either too weak or too much in disarray at the moment to be able to offer a viable political alternative to the Congress(I). Third, the CPI(M), along with its allies and satellites, has been able to inflict a humiliating defeat on the Congress(I) in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura in the recent elections.

Although the combined strength of all these States constitutes only about one-ninth of the Lok Sabha seats and in spite of the total failure on the part of the CPI(M) to make a breakthrough in any other States, especially in the Hindi-speaking area, it can rightly claim that it is the only significant and 'solid' opposition party in the country today.

Can it from this advantageous position surge forward in the coming years, as the CPI(M) leaders fondly hope, and transform itself from a basically regional party into an all-India one, thus becoming a contender for power in New Delhi?

This is, in fact, one of the most crucial questions in Indian politics today. In this context, Bhabani Sen Gupta's book is not only timely, but is also the only serious study on the CPI(M) by an acknowledged expert on Indian communism. He writes with sympathy for the party but does not refrain from criticising it when necessary.

The basic features of the CPI(M), according to the author, are

(1) It is a 'Leninist' parliamentary party, combining parliamentary and extra-parliamentary mobilisation and movement,

(2) It is the largest 'independent' communist party in the world,

(3) It is relatively a small political force in India,



(4) It is a communist party with a large peasant base in selected pockets but without a peasant guerrilla army,

(5) It has established a 'govern-cum-mobilise' model in West Bengal and Tripura (The book was published in January 1979. Since then the CPI(M)-led front has captured power in Kerala.)

By governing better than the Congress(I) and the Janata Party, the CPI(M) wants to make an impact on the poor in other parts of the country, especially in the border States of West Bengal. But the author notes with disappointment that after one and half years of the CPI(M) rule in West Bengal, it has hardly had any political impact in Bihar or Orissa because of, what he calls, 'formidable communication barriers'.

The remarkable increase in the CPI(M)'s influence in Assam in recent years has been mainly among the Bengali population (In Tripura, now a predominantly Bengali-speaking State, considerable advance has been made). The current movement in Assam, which is primarily against the Bengali speaking inhabitants, has placed the CPI(M) in a tricky situation.

The author thinks that it is vital for the CPI(M) to capture power in another major (non-Bengali-speaking) State in eastern India but he sees no signs of it yet.

On the other hand, he predicts that 'If the Congress gets back to power at the Centre the Marxists will find it very difficult to govern (in West Bengal)'. This has now become a reality. The CPI(M) has become very apprehensive about its continued rule in West Bengal, not to speak of spreading its influence in other States.

The author says that the party 'faces no ideological challenge either from the right or from the left of the spectrum of Indian communism'. This is largely correct as the CPI, on the 'right', has virtually surrendered to the CPI(M). The Dange faction of the CPI, with its anti-CPI(M) stance, may continue to create trouble, but after the CPI(M)'s prompt support to the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, the Russians will see that too many problems are not created for the 'independent-minded' CPI(M).

On the 'left', the pro-Chinese communists are hopelessly divided and are so utterly confused with the post-Mao developments in China that they do not pose either an ideological or an organizational challenge to the CPI(M).

Can the CPI(M) capture power at the national level and hold it through the parliamentary process? This issue perhaps has never been discussed even by the inner conclave of the party. The party leadership thinks, as mentioned by E M S Namboodiripad to the author, that there will be a steady collapse of the present political order in India in the eighties. It is assumed that the CPI(M) then, leading the left and democratic front, should be able to seize power in New Delhi.

Whether this will actually happen or not, it is clear that what has already been achieved by the CPI(M), since its inception in 1964, is quite remarkable. The book deals with different aspects of the CPI(M) — ideological, organizational, administrative and international — with competence and clarity. This balanced and pioneering study on the CPI(M) is an essential reading for students of Indian communism.

Pradip Bose

**THE NIGHTMARE AND AFTER** by Acharya J B

Kripalani. Popular Prakashan Private Ltd., Bombay, 1980

**THE GREAT BETRAYAL 1966-1977** by Kavita

Narawane. Popular Prakashan Private Ltd, Bombay, 1980

**THE PEOPLE'S VERDICT** by G G Mirchandani

Vikas Publishing House Private Ltd, New Delhi, 1980

Of late, publication of one's thoughts or memoirs has become both a fashion and a paying proposition. No doubt this explains the anxiety of 'authors' to rush into print. Unfortunately, the product, and not just because of the haste, is half-baked, often incomplete and invariably poorly organised and ill-thought through. The three books under review unhesitatingly fall into this category, though for differing reasons and in different ways.

Acharya Kripalani's book is a collection of articles written by him since 1977 and printed periodically in a selection of daily newspapers. To this compendium is added the spice of an occasional lecture on fundamental rights and the flourish of a convocation address. The articles, like nearly all political newspaper articles of their type, served their purpose when they were first printed by the press but do not justify re-publication. They were on parochial, limited issues and suggested hasty remedies that were interesting and perhaps even enlightening the morning after the event they discussed, but today, when the event itself has been forgotten, or its significance has taken on a larger perspective in a broader framework, they are either uninteresting or naive and unhelpful. First thoughts are acceptable as first thoughts, but when re-published they automatically appear as if they are products of greater consideration and to find that they are not so is disappointing and annoying. In comparison the lecture and the convocation address, which were labours of greater effort, are sparkling pieces in a dull hoard.

The lecture on fundamental rights attempts a provocative analysis of what is meant by the liberty of the individual. The stand it takes is that in a democracy, it is the liberty of the social individual — and not the individual per se — that is sacrosanct. It is a pity that Kripalani did not give himself the opportunity to develop this idea. For, is the right to own property a right of the social individual? A social right



to property implying common ownership would, at least in the Hegelian metaphysic, deny the essential existence of the individual persona. The Hegelian argument would be that the liberty of the individual is always absolute and this is precisely why the individual can, if he does so consciously and willingly, abdicate some aspects or degrees of it. But, then, this line of thought contradicts Kripalani's

Kavita Narawane's book attempts an analysis of the eleven years of Mrs. Gandhi's first premiership. Its conclusion is identified by the unambiguous bias of its title. Unfortunately, this conclusion, whether correct or not, is arrived at and justified by a recourse to emotive writing that distresses the objectivity of the reader. Even sympathisers of Kavita Narawane's standpoint would prefer to have the arguments established by fact and logic, by reason and restraint. For, Narawane feels confident enough to speak on behalf of the Almighty: 'Mrs. Gandhi stands condemned at the bar of public opinion. If by any chance, through any machinations she escapes the verdict by courts here, she would not escape the judgement of the Almighty'. And, yet, the pity of it is that in moments of calmer, cooler consideration when Miss Narawane is exercising her own thoughts and not speaking ex-cathedra, she can be piercingly accurate and revealingly perceptive. 'The impress of Mrs. Gandhi's power was more the result of her particular style than of substance coming from the grass roots of the party organisation. Her dramatic moves, her unpredictability and her bold defiance cowed down the ring leaders of the Congress, and at the same time entertained the public at a heavy cost to democracy. Her actions created a sense of insecurity amongst her colleagues and encouraged sycophants amongst them. It led to greater and greater dependence of the party upon her...'

The Mirchandani book is a marvel of rapid printing. For, it presents the much acclaimed DCM computer study of the 1980 elections within six weeks of the results, with additional chapters on the 1977 elections and the interregnum tacked on to add weight. But, the DCM computer study is presented as a series of statistics broken down in several repetitive fashions and unimaginatively presented without any efforts to draw out rational argument or conclusion from them. Statistics on their own only rank after 'damn lies'. But, lies at least are imaginative and often tell a story. Further, to pad it out the book has a detailed four chapters on the political fortunes of Mrs. Gandhi from defeat in 1977 to victory in 1980. These provide a useful reference for those who have forgotten the sequence or particular specifics and want a quick refresher. But, in all honesty these fall outside the principal scope of the book. This paradox is itself indicative of the worth of this book. If Mirchandani could have modelled his book on the Butler and Kavanagh series entitled '*The British General Elections*' he would have written a more illuminating and satisfying book. Analyses of election results are worth while only when they are both informative and interesting.

Karan Thapar

## JUSTICE AND POLITICAL ORDER IN INDIA

by Soghanlal Datta Gupta. K.P. Bagchi and Co

ATTEMPTING an abstract theme like the one under review and attempting it in the style of Datta Gupta, is really what fills the gap on the subject matter. Trying to give shape to the concept of justice which has been dangerously blurred — if not hopelessly mystified — is the effort of the writer and he has certainly accomplished the task. Though starting with the assertion that his is not an ambitious plan, the author has not spared any aspect from his scrutiny.

The process of exploration starts with an analysis of the theoretical perspective against an historical background. It has tended to be so wide in its dimensions that hardly any set of opinion has been left out, although in most cases only for the purpose of a critical analysis thereof. All the same, it starts with Plato, travelling down the stream into the realms of religion and philosophy. The author has done well to give considerate thought and place to Aristotle's ideas and has surveyed the long liberal tradition at length though in the process revealing himself in sympathy with Marxist traditions at large. He has also exposed the hollowness of the term justice being analysed without reference to the conflicting social relations. In his words, justice 'in the abstract moral terms, isolated from the social context, leads to ethical subjectivism and dilemma'.

In fact, this exposes the futility of the idea of treating justice as a balance of interests in terms of moral obligation, this again also shows the practical uselessness of the Christian doctrine, 'love thy neighbour' in the words of the author. Thereafter, he searches for the concept of justice in the social order wherein a conflict of interests would be replaced by harmonious human relations, and not be sustained by any external consideration but by the very nature of the social relations themselves.

Having gone that far in his theoretical premises, the author attempts to relate this understanding to the political institutions and the ideological cross currents of Indian politics. In so doing, he is solely guided by a righteous consideration that the theory alone is not enough. Therefore, what follows in the next three chapters is an institutionalised study of the idea of justice, attaching it to the proceedings in the Constituent Assembly of India, Parliament and the idea of justice and the Supreme Court and the idea of justice in its practical connotations.

For reasons best known to the author, he conveniently skips over the study of the idea of justice with regard to the most vital limb of the institutional framework of governmental machinery, namely, the executive. Needless to add that the guiding wheel or the steering wheel of the mechanism of government in its totality is in a way a direct off-shoot of the actions and thinking in the executive web of the structure.



In dealing with institutionalised justice, through the Constituent Assembly, the author has certainly taken pains to put forward the deliberations in some forty pages. The examination is elaborate, but the author concludes that the Constitution as drafted by the Constituent Assembly in the year 1949, provided a totally wrong direction to the problem of justice. The approach of compromise of the Constituent Assembly, according to the author, 'led to a defence of unequal positions in the society', and to the denial of justice in the real sense of the term. This attitude to justice gave rise to many a grim battle of tensions in the years that followed. Even if one may like to agree that the Constituent Assembly did not do full justice to the idea of justice, one is certainly tempted to have reservations on the conclusions drawn by the author, because the Constituent Assembly of India reflected the best of the talent and a variety of shades of opinion of persons belonging to different geographical and ideological groupings.

Datta Gupta then relates institutionalised justice to the socio-economic conditions that prevailed before the Constitution was framed, adopted and made operative. The study has in a way tended to make a deep survey of the nature and extent of inequilibrium that prevailed in the socio-economic dimension of justice. The chapter on the Supreme Court makes extensive reference to the case law available on the subject. But the conclusions drawn in both the chapters apparently incline to the Eastern region, probably a little too heavily.

Subscribing to the viewpoint of Justice Krishna Iyer of the Indian Supreme Court, the author calls for a new schooling for judges and asks for a new philosophy of life and a new set of values to be instilled. The judiciary has to be made aware of the social perspective in which it is working and it has also to abjure its prejudice against politics.

Besides the parliamentary and judicial notions, the author does well to add another vital chapter to his study, based on the analysis of the ideological dimension, which in turn is based on the conflicting viewpoints of the major political parties as to the location or hide-out of justice. The analysis includes the study of extreme view points — propagating the philosophy of right and left — cutting in between the moderate thinking and approach of the Indian National Congress. How different are the programmes and outlooks of the various political parties to matters social, economic and political makes the chapter not only interesting but also informative. It is full of other kinds of 'information' — resolutions, speeches of leaders, the viewpoints of the members, the cross strains affecting and moulding the policies of the political parties and what not. It is a chapter which provides the quantum to the subject matter of the study because institutions have no relevance and no meaning without the role played by the political parties steering them.

The study on the whole is really worth the job undertaken and the author needs to be given the credit

for such an elaborate, analytical, historic and institutionalised study even when we may disagree with the conclusions drawn. All these years, tall promises have always been made in the name of the people and the promises have been violated, too, in the name of the people. True and very rightly so. But to say that the working of the parliamentary and judicial institutions shows utter bankruptcy of the political ideology of the ruling class, is nothing short of attempting working things one way, and divorcing them completely from the other. Even if one agrees to the conclusions drawn by the author about the approach of judicial and legislative wings of government, one is once again tempted to ask the author about his considered observations regarding the executive inter alia justice? The author would do well to answer.

**Lalita Eswaran**

## **MONOPOLY CAPITAL AND PUBLIC POLICY**

**by S K Goyal Allied Publishers, 1979.**

A BRITISH biologist and cynic once prefaced his address to the Royal Academy with the words, 'These, gentlemen, are the opinions on which I base my facts'. This may seem a rather cruel indictment for those who believe in the objectivity of facts, but in its spirit it is a necessary reminder to those who believe that all that is required to arrive at the appropriate result is data.

Although the corporate sector is saddled with the need to provide a dizzying degree of detailed information to innumerable government agencies, it is of very little use to any analyst because of the senseless lack of coordination and centralization of this data. S K Gupta's book is an enthusiastic venture in the collation of the available data. As the author modestly states, 'We have only pieced together the information and data, with the objective to have an overall perspective over the past forty years' and he relies solely on this information, since 'Only government records can prove the point, either way'. Wading through the material provided by the Monopolies Inquiry Commissions, the Dutt Committee and the Sachar Committee, each with its ambiguities in the basis of calculation, definitions that are a shade different each time and terms of reference that vary in their ambit, must indeed have been a difficult task.

This book, which is an extended version of an earlier paper by the author, traces the evolution of the concept of monopoly capital in India starting with the days of the Raj. The story begins with the system of managing agency houses, the eclipse of native entrepreneurs except in a few areas, the gradual strengthening and entrenchment of large local trading houses into big industrial houses with dispersed holdings. The description of the coming of foreign private investment under a cloud and its joining hands with the Indian empires via various participative mechanisms to ensure the hold on their former markets, makes an interesting tale in itself.



Thankfully this account is free both of rancour and the misplaced ideology based explanations that mar most other attempts

When the lack of any agency that can 'collect, analyse and interpret corporate data and their impact on society, economy and public policy' is coupled with the appalling 'definitional diversity' of the corporate giant itself, the situation is ripe for mischief. Mere assertion of the constitutional commitment to socialism leads nowhere and will only allow the continuation of the present situation where 'the law may seem to have been administered but the spirit of the law will be conveniently evaded.'

Goyal's study of the trends in concentration retain the standard conclusions that industrial combines have increased their degree of concentration and that the Birlas are currently a step ahead of the Tatas. The reasons behind this include the imaginative techniques of financial management the houses employ, their utilization of the loopholes created by cumbersome government regulations and the ponderous machinery that government employs to enforce these regulations. The result is that 'the Indian economy which is expected to be a regulated and planned one' is 'today faced with the major problem of shortages in the essential and basic consumer goods needed by the common man.'

The author's enthusiasm and the widespread habit of suspecting wicked private entrepreneurs' manipulation of everything in sight makes him blunder. This reviewer takes exception to such sweeping statements as 'price controls in India continue to be an informal understanding between the producers and civil servants'. Surely, even if the press is in the payroll of industrial houses and even if their sponsored research wings are efficiently biasing their findings, this statement does ring rather hollow.

Goyal expands the concept of business power that is traditionally used to include the capacity to influence decision-making in government. The emphasis of this difference in the definition is not very original and seems a trifle laboured. This emphasis also makes the lengthy diatribe on data availability seem meaningless because the data on this can only be illustrative and can hardly ever be systematised. The very nature of influence is that it must be amenable to different situations, persons and policies.

Influence will, therefore, be tailored as much by the need of the hour as to suit the style of those who wish to wield it. Therefore, not only can it not be quantified but it must also always remain situation-specific to be effective. For if influence could be classified it could be curbed and if it could be curbed it wouldn't be influence at all. Goyal's illustrations include only the likely and already exposed modes of exercising influence and the specific cases he cites are rather mild — is this the result of influence too? One may begin to wonder, if the spirit of his thesis is taken too seriously.

**Dilip Cherian**

## **A SHAFT OF SUNLIGHT, Memories of a Varied**

**Life by Philip Mason London, Andre Deutsch, 1978**

FOR the Indian reader, the most immediately interesting part of Philip Mason's autobiography is the account of his twenty years as a member of the last generation of British ICS officers. Arriving in India in 1928, he was convinced from the start that British rule would end long before the end of his 35 years of service, and even apart from that, he had already decided that after twenty years he would take his proportionate pension and resign while he was still of an age to make a successful start in some other career. It would be a mistake, therefore, to assume that Mason (or perhaps any other individual officer) was in any way 'typical' of his group and generation, indeed it soon becomes clear that he had had throughout his life unusual qualities of mind, none of them unique in themselves, but not often found in a man so fully and vigorously involved in public affairs as he was in India.

The most striking of these qualities is a strain of what, for want of a better word, might be called mysticism. At irregular intervals through his life, Mason had moments of ineffable experience — the kind of experience whose quality it is impossible to convey in words, but which involves some kind of communion with nature, and perhaps through nature with something beyond it.

He achieved this reconciliation in his own mind during a period of enforced inactivity when, injured in the face in a shooting accident, he was blinded for several weeks, and had the chance to think and reflect. For him it was achieved through the medium of the Christian religion. In the story of Jesus it 'was truly the reconciliation of power with love that I had hoped to find. Since then I have never seriously doubted that there is unity between almighty purpose and the best part of the spirit of man.'

'A varied life' it certainly was — as the life of any ICS officer must necessarily be. After early district and secretariat experience, he was attached during the war to various defence organisations: first to the Defence Co-ordination Department, as Deputy Secretary, then as secretary to the Chiefs of Staff Committee, and later as Head of the Conference Secretariat on Mountbatten's staff, when Mountbatten was Supreme Commander. Thus, he was in constant touch with great men and great events, this period gave him the material he later used in the last part of his history of the Indian Army, *A Matter of Honour*.

Here he sticks to the small segment of events that fell under the observation of one officer of medium seniority, and invariably takes a personal line, his account, touching lightly on matters of high policy, well conveys the atmosphere in which the major events of these years were enacted. The great, and occasion-



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Allied Publishers, 1979

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ally the notorious, are brought to life in these pages. Mountbatten himself, Wavell in a most affectionately drawn portrait, Auchinleck, Churchill, and, unexpectedly, Enoch Powell, who rates almost the whole of a sub-section headed 'A Very Odd Character', and in whose curious, overlogical and enigmatic mind, Mason, knowing him off and on over a period of several years, confesses an interest bordering on the obsessive. Mason was for a time the Government of India spokesman in the Central Legislative Assembly on defence matters, and it fell to him to defend — after having had a hand in formulating — the government's policy on the Indian National Army. The personal angle we find here supplements interestingly the more full and detailed account he has given us in *A Matter of Honour*.

And yet it is not about these stirring times, nor about the last chapter of his official career in India, when he was tutor to the grandsons of the Nizam of Hyderabad, that Mason writes most feelingly. In the archetypal manner of ICS officers (though it may be asked how far the archetype has been created by Mr Mason himself, by his study of *The Men Who Ruled India*) he gave his heart to his district, Garhwal, of which he was Collector from 1936 to 1939. It is difficult to avoid the impression that, at least during the period covered by this book, and perhaps up to the time of writing it thirty years and more later, Garhwal was *the* experience of his life.

He calls Collector Garhwal 'the best job in India' — not in absolute terms, but for him, at that particular time, and it is clear that the man, the place and the period met in an almost completely happy and satisfying conjunction. Much of what he relates smacks of a paternalist attitude, and this word he does not repudiate rather he argues that, in those particular circumstances, paternalism was what was needed. 'It was the stage the district had reached, and it suited the stage I had reached'.

He is clear-sighted about his own motives. He would agree with a hypothetical critic of today that 'in a general sense I had been trained (by his education at Sedburgh and Oxford) for just the kind of leadership I was exercising and enjoying so much. I was the product of an imperial society'. He is prepared to admit that his identification with the district and its people was necessarily incomplete: he neither shared their life as it was lived, nor had any prospect or intention of staying there for ever. But none of this takes away from the zest with which he describes district life, which for him meant life among the mountains which were one of his passions. Accompanied by his wife, Mary, he spent no less than nine months of every year in camp, doing a new survey and settlement. It was surely this nearness to the earth, the mountains and nature, as much as the remoteness of the district, making its Collector largely independent of interference by the government, that gave Garhwal its special place in Mason's life.

The reader hoping to find in this book any closely-argued contribution to the discussion of matters of

political and administrative policy during the last twenty years of the Raj (a word that Mason dislikes and avoids) will be disappointed. It is a personal document, and valuable because it brings us into contact with a sensitive and civilized mind. Public affairs are seen through the prism of that particular mind, and our attention is focussed on the man, rather than the affairs.

Pervading the book is a sense of Mason's emotional response to India, particularly to 'his' district of Garhwal, which seems to have become his personal touchstone and point of reference in his approach to all sorts of things for a long time after he left it. All this reacted strongly with this earlier feeling for the loveliness of England, and the way in which he conveys this complexity of emotional response gives the book great depth, and provides an insight that is valuable, certainly from the human, and perhaps also from the historical point of view. It coloured the whole of his Indian experience, and much of his life in England after his return — certainly up to the end of the period covered by this book, and, one would guess from the feeling with which he writes, for the rest of his life too. 'There came a spring morning (in Dorset) when I stepped out to so fresh a scent of dew and grass and fern that I said to Mary.

' "It's just like a morning in Upper Garhwal!"

' "You mean", she said, "one of those mornings in Upper Garhwal that we used to say were just like a spring morning in England?" '

Janet Rizvi

**THE CAPITALIST WORLD ECONOMY: Essays**  
by Immanuel Wallerstein. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979

*'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways, the point is to change it' Karl Marx (Eleventh Theses on Feuerbach).*

FOR nearly a hundred years before Karl Marx made known this expectation, the world had indeed been changing at a pace unknown at any time before in human history. Marx, like several others in his time, was certain that the industrial revolution had shattered the 'cosmic fetters' that had hitherto set limits, virtually inflexible, to human freedom. The industrial revolution, Marx argued, had created the 'material conditions' which had set in motion an irreversible dynamic, from the 'realm of necessity', human history was poised towards the 'realm of freedom'.

Wallerstein's *Essays* represent an absorbing attempt at reformulating the faith in the historical thrust of this complex and still unfolding dynamic towards human freedom. He is categorical about his pre-suppositions. Wallerstein seeks 'Truth' as an 'interpretation, meaningful for our times, of the social world as it was, as it is, as it will be'. The concern to know what is, is a part of a larger concern to



change things towards what ought to be. And for that there has to be an 'integral connection between historical social science and politics'

All enveloping change that accompanied the industrial revolution has been defined both as 'organic process' and as 'progress'. But social theory in the developed world — the fount not only of change but also of definition — has been dominated by the notion of progress. The literary yield has been enormous. But the author sees nothing in its awesome bulk even by way of clarifying the theoretical issues elaborated by the '19th century progenitors of this mode of analysis'. Intellectual attention has been pivoted on a 'non-problem: can stages (of development) be skipped'. Hence the proliferation of 'false concepts', models of development. Against the 'non-problem', Wallerstein also records a logical objection: an echo of the paradox of the Zeno's arrow — 'If a stage can be skipped, it isn't a stage.'

Marxist analysis has also fallen into this 'trap'. Conventional Marxist analysis has lost sight of the 'totality'. For Wallerstein, it is the centrality of the 'totality' in the 'Marxist mode of analysis' which constitutes its critical point of departure from all 'bourgeois thought'. Instead Marxists have reduced Marx, in the sensitive rendering of Braudel, to models 'fixed permanently in their simplicity, they have been given the force of law. In this way has the creative power of the most powerful social analysis of the last century been shackled'. The Marxist critique has been reduced to just one among several competing models of development.

In Wallerstein's reformulation, the 'world market' is the fundamental unit of analysis. No constituent unit of the 'world market' whether that be a unit of advanced industrial capitalism like England or the US or a unit of socialist industrial development like the USSR or China can ever be a meaningful unit of analysis. 'National development as natural history' is a myth. Capitalism as a 'world system' does not, and, indeed, cannot allow other forms to co-exist. And, therefore, to characterise a particular State as 'socialist', 'feudal' or 'pre-capitalist', makes no sense. The notion of 'stage' is meaningful, but only in relation to the capitalist world-economy as a 'single empirical framework'.

From within the Marxist tradition, a Chilean, Andre Gunder Frank, was perhaps the first to call attention to the 'common destiny' into which capitalism had swept the entire planet. But unlike Wallerstein, Frank's intellectual concerns — like that of Furtado and Seers before him in Latin America — were shaped in that part of the planet which participates in the 'common destiny' as a victim. To use a parable, it is the experience of a Sudra sharing a 'common destiny' with the Brahmin in a Brahmanic world.

Frank posited 'underdevelopment' as a modern phenomenon distinct from 'non-development'. Histori-

cally, underdevelopment and colonialism are co-extensive. Capitalist development creates underdevelopment. Without the latter, Frank concluded, the former is an historical impossibility. Before Frank, the Marxist critique had persisted in characterising 'underdevelopment' as a 'pre-modern survival'. Marx himself, recognised in imperialism, even though he noted the terrible suffering imperialism inflicted on the enslaved, an 'unconscious tool' of history at work. Frank rejected, as a Marxist, this element in Marx's understanding of imperialism.

It is interesting and perhaps instructive that this perception of the intrinsic historical connection between colonial exploitation and capitalist development come from a citizen of the formerly colonised world. Nearly seventy years before Frank, Gandhi in his critique of the 'modern industrial civilisation' (*Hind Swaraj*) was emphatic that this civilisation had been built on the ruin of other lands and people. Another citizen of the colonised world, Lohia (*Economics After Marx*, 1942) defined the capitalist system as a 'complex of an inner and an outer circle. Capitalist development ensured continuous development in the inner circle and continuous backwardness and retardation in the outer circle'. Of course these voices have failed to find a place in intellectual discourse on the subject even in India. Could it have something to do with a colonial past alive in our minds and hearts?

Unlike a Frank or a Lohia, Wallerstein's intellectual concerns have been shaped by a 'common destiny' experienced as if it were at the other end of the world. He seems deeply distressed that the 'historical thrust towards human freedom', the original promise of the modern civilisation has eluded both the victors — albeit in a different sense — and the victims. Early in this century a similar concern had moved that gifted writer, George Orwell, to write with such delicate intensity on what happens to the victors, the conquerors, in the process of conquest. This is not to suggest that Orwell or Wallerstein are unaware or insensitive to the plight of the victims.

From the other end, Gandhi and Lohia too were acutely aware that conquest and oppression dehumanise the oppressor. But it is important not to forget that the same historical process meant very different things at the two ends. And, invariably, like the two hands of the same body in the Biblical parable, 'the left hand knows not what the right hand doeth'.

Is it possible to comprehend the world historical process (capitalist world economy) impinging so differently at the two ends, through an integral analytical framework? Wallerstein's answer would be a categorical yes. To be meaningful, such an analytical framework — given the stated assumptions of the author — should be able to indicate ways of liberating the arrested 'historical thrust towards human freedom'.

The 'essential feature' of capitalism, according to Wallerstein, is 'production for sale' to realise 'maxi-



mum profit', and not, as Marxist analysis invariably assumes, 'industrialism'. Its defining characteristic is not 'free' or 'wage labour' but the emergence of 'a unit with a single division of labour and multiple cultural systems'. Clearly 'technique' or the 'industrial mode' are not of primary significance in creating or sustaining this 'division of labour'. Hence, class, that critical category, the prime mover in the 'historical law of motion' of the Marxist conception, cannot be adequately comprehended in terms of the 'industrial mode' as it operates within a 'nation state'.

The world-wide division of labour implies a re-definition of class in global terms. 'Ethno-nations' argues the author, — there may be several even within a nation-State — constitute the critical class agglomeration that reflects a global division of labour. Tensions between nation-States are an expression of a global class struggle.

For its sheer intellectual daring, Wallerstein's 'reformulation' is awfully tempting. It is instinct with a passion that seeks to understand the problems of the contemporary world as problems of the entire human species. But it is an act of daring that is substantially negated by the criteria of validity intrinsic to the framework of the study.

'World-Government', according to Wallerstein, is the ultimate and the only way out of a 'global unfreedom' created by the 'world capitalist system'. For that, class solidarity, the prime mover in the historical process, has to be horizontal, cutting across nation-States. That was the original expectation of Marx. But the logical imperative of the 'world capitalist system' as defined by Wallerstein, implies vertical solidarities, i.e., ethno-nations. It is indeed surprising that such a far-reaching 'reformulation' seems unaware of theoretical problems that arise as a direct consequence of its line of inquiry.

Is inequality inherent in the concept of a division of labour? And if that is so, would the world capitalist system survive the abolition of division of labour? Would the industrial technique of production be viable in the absence of exchange and a global division of labour?

In Wallerstein's 'reformulation,' 'mode of production' is defined by 'relations of production'. Marx and Engels defined 'mode of production', at least so far as it concerned the 'industrial mode'—Marx was not consistent regarding the preceding stages, e.g., 'technique' defines the hunting-food gathering stage, and 'relations of production' define 'feudalism' or slave society — according to the 'technique of production'. This way of defining was rooted in basic assumptions regarding the relationship between man, nature and freedom. And in this dialectic, technique was assumed to be the dynamic mediator. But if the critical mediator is not 'technique' but 'relations of production', then from whence springs the original impetus towards the modern industrial mode?

Suresh Sharma

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# KEEPING UP

## the march of Industry in West Bengal

The Left Front Government in West Bengal have kept up the tempo of Industrial Development in the State.

The paid-up Capital of the Joint-Stock Companies has shown a steady increase of 29.6% per annum since 1976-77 and 29000 new employments have been created. These are sufficient to belie the apprehensions of many who think Industry has come to a halt in West Bengal.

### ● Projects already set-up

A TV project at Calcutta, a Scooter project at Kharagpur by WBIDC, an Electronics Industrial Estate (Taratala), two Electronic projects (Taratala), Rock Phosphate Project at Purulia, State Weaving Project at Birbhum.

### ● Projects shortly to be Commissioned :

- 1) Electrically Controlled Hand Tools Project (Taratala)
- 2) TV Picture Tube Project (Taratala)
- 3) Walkie-Talkie Sets Projects (Calcutta)
- 4) Hard & Soft Ferrite Projects (Kalyani)
- 5) Burnt Dolomite Project (Kalyani)
- 6) Watch Assembly Unit (Kurseong)
- 7) Transfusion Solution Project (Behala).

### ● Growth Centres, the Focal Points of Industrial Development

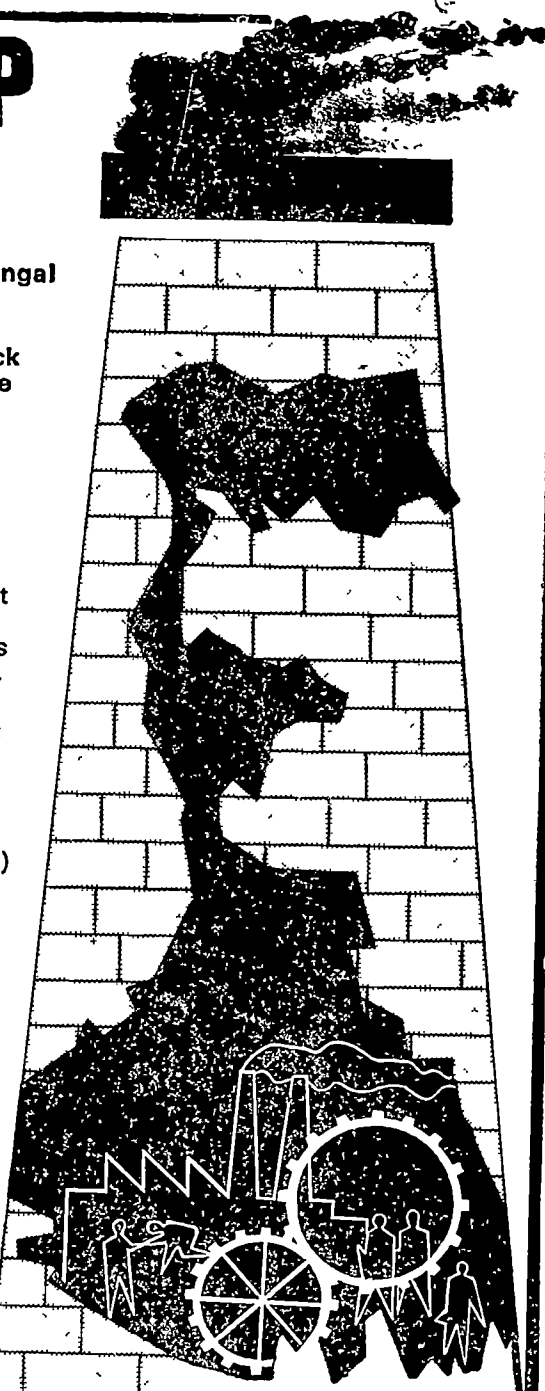
WBIDC have provided 21 Industries with 166.6 acres of developed land at three of the most important Growth Centres i.e. Kalyani, Kharagpur & Haldia. The State Incentive Scheme 1978 has provided 128 industries with 211.12 crores of capital investment subsidy.

### ● Haldia Petro-Chemical Complex :

Works on this ambitious project are afoot and it is expected to be set up within 1982-83.

### ● Other Projects :

Include expansion programmes of West Bengal Pharmaceutical and Phytochemical Development Corporation, West Bengal Mineral Development Corporation, W B Sugar Industries Dev. Corp. and many others.



GOVT. OF WEST BENGAL

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A hand-drawn diagram of a continuous loop, possibly representing a path or a circuit. The loop is composed of several connected segments: a horizontal line at the top, a vertical line on the right, a horizontal line at the bottom, and a vertical line on the left. The loop is drawn with a thick, irregular line. Various points and segments are labeled with letters and numbers. On the top horizontal segment, there are labels 'a', 'b', 'c', 'd', 'e', 'f', 'g', 'h', 'i', 'j', 'k', 'l', 'm', 'n', 'o', 'p', 'q', 'r', 's', 't', 'u', 'v', 'w', 'x', 'y', 'z'. On the right vertical segment, there are labels 'a', 'b', 'c', 'd', 'e', 'f', 'g', 'h', 'i', 'j', 'k', 'l', 'm', 'n', 'o', 'p', 'q', 'r', 's', 't', 'u', 'v', 'w', 'x', 'y', 'z'. On the bottom horizontal segment, there are labels 'a', 'b', 'c', 'd', 'e', 'f', 'g', 'h', 'i', 'j', 'k', 'l', 'm', 'n', 'o', 'p', 'q', 'r', 's', 't', 'u', 'v', 'w', 'x', 'y', 'z'. On the left vertical segment, there are labels 'a', 'b', 'c', 'd', 'e', 'f', 'g', 'h', 'i', 'j', 'k', 'l', 'm', 'n', 'o', 'p', 'q', 'r', 's', 't', 'u', 'v', 'w', 'x', 'y', 'z'. The diagram is drawn on a grid background.

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May 1980

# 249

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*Development Dimensions*

*Development Dimensions*





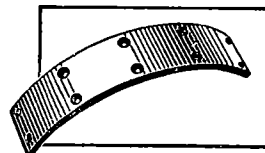
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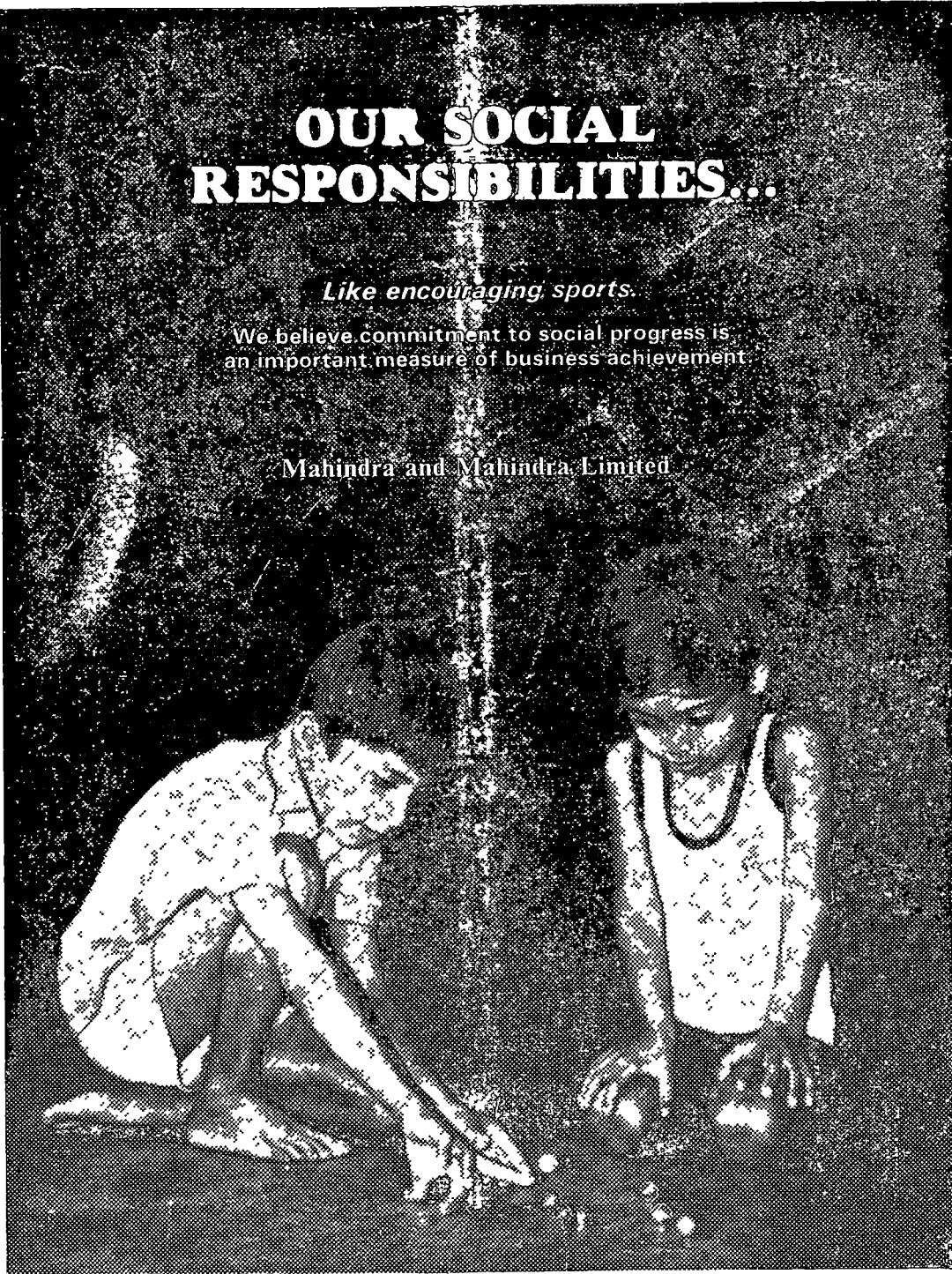


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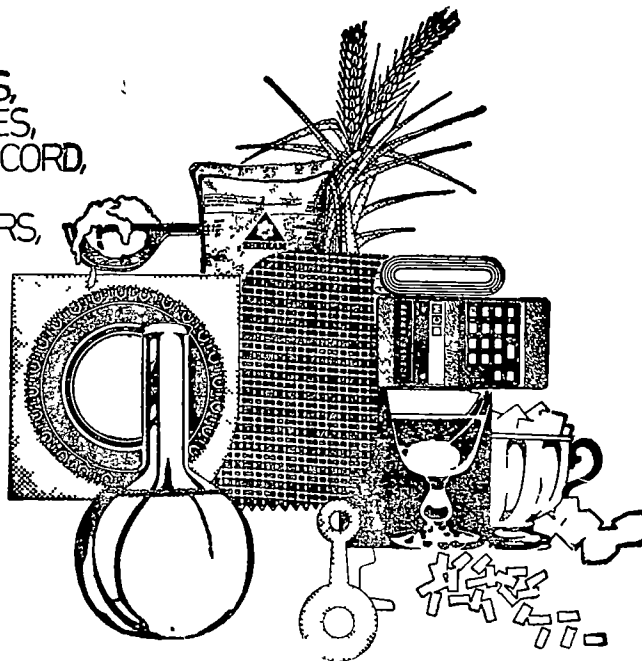
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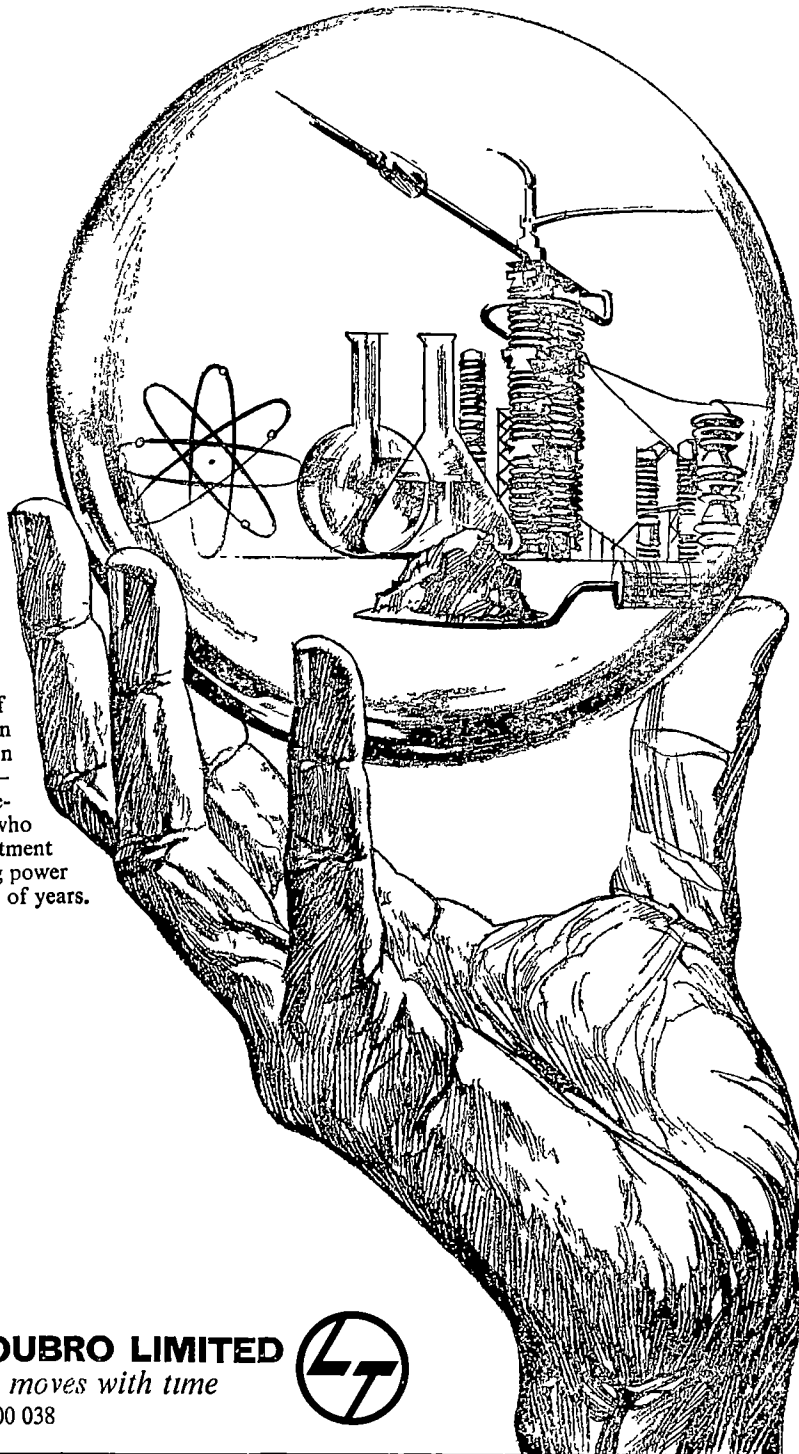


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but he is a thinking reed—*

Blaise Pascal  
Mathematician, Physicist, Theologian

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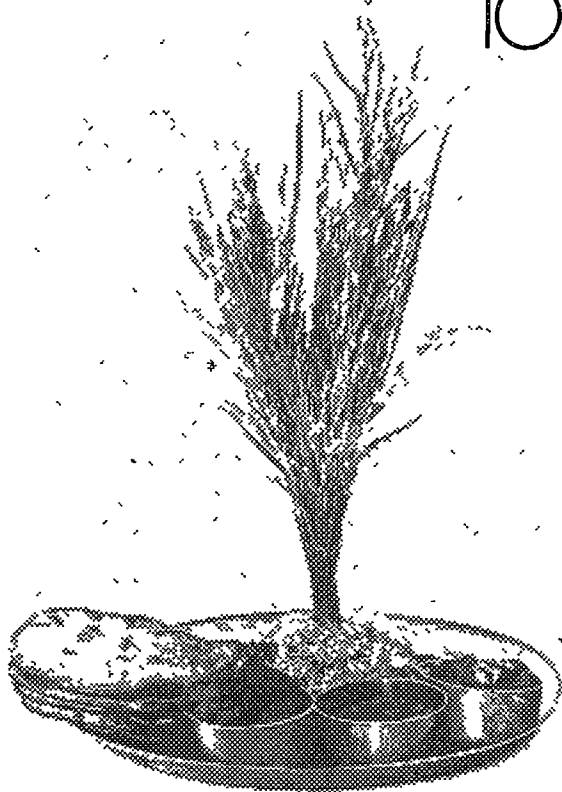
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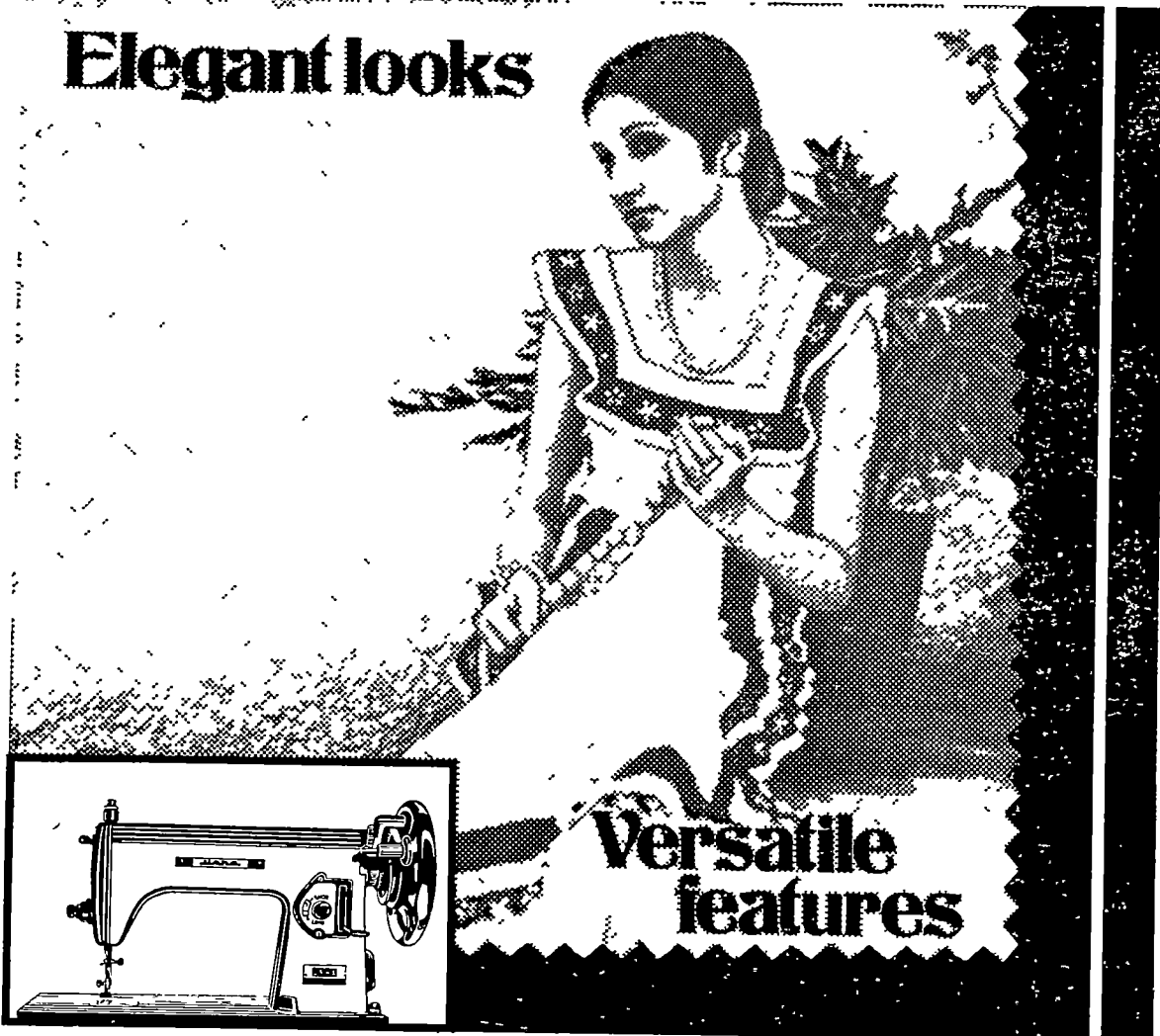
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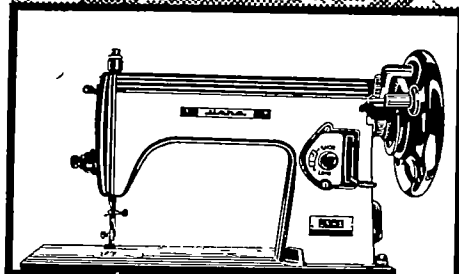
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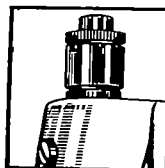
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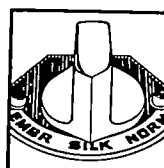
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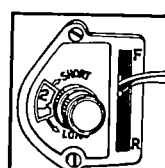
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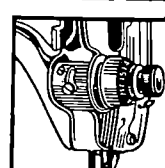
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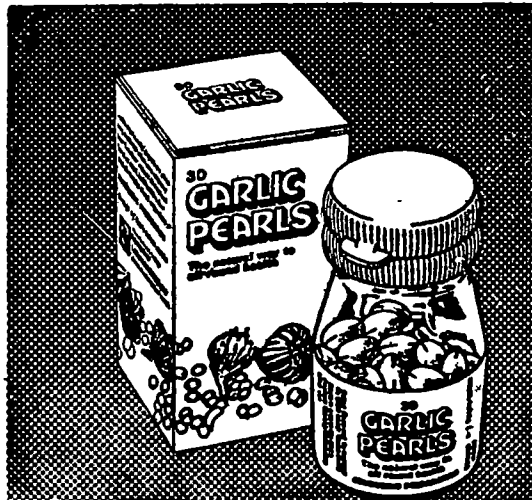
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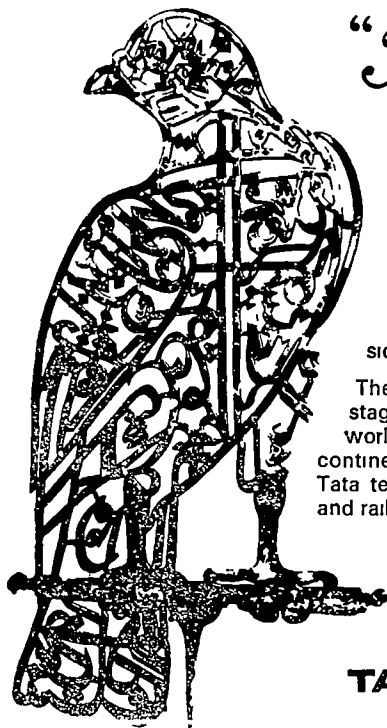


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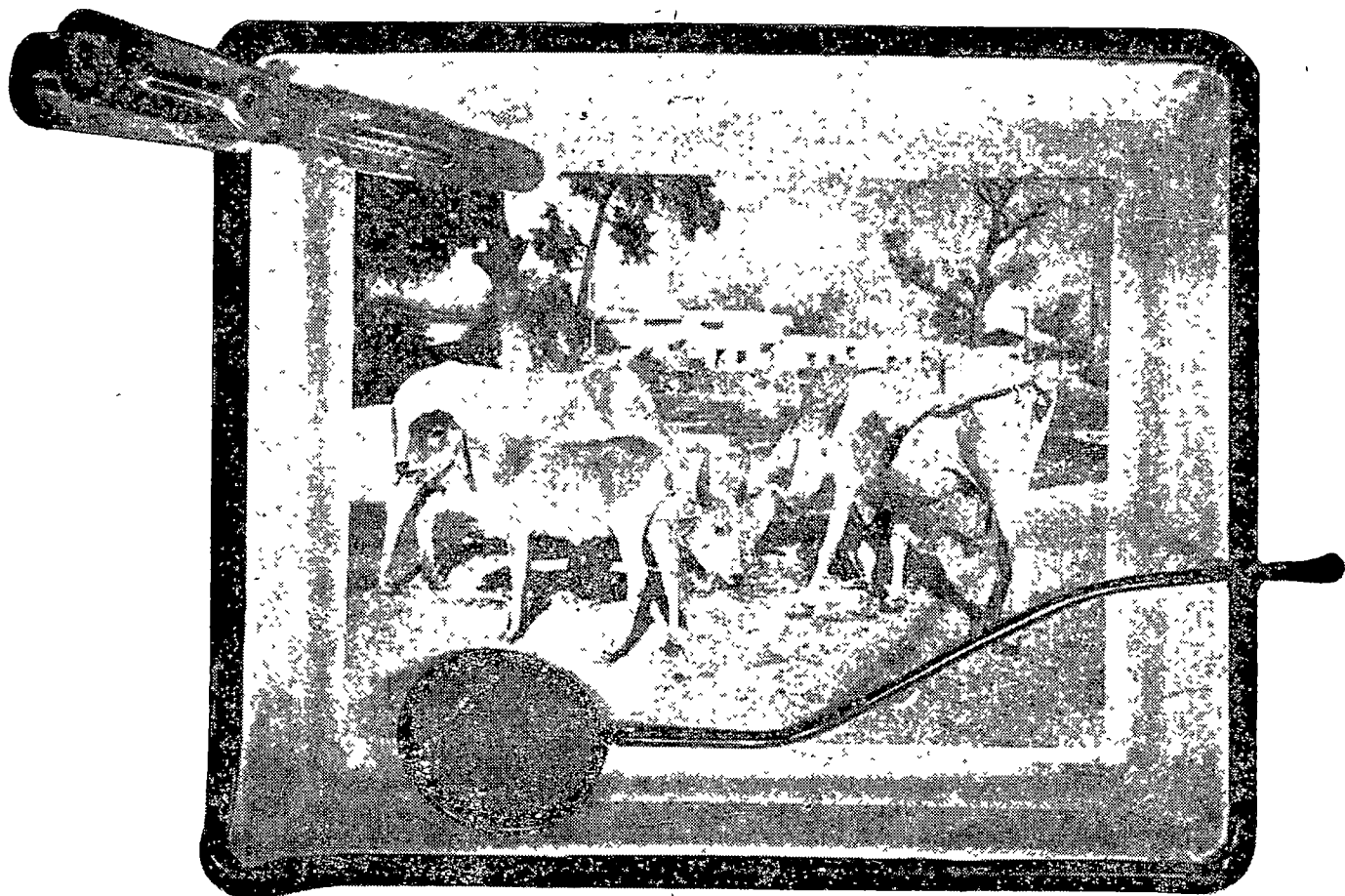
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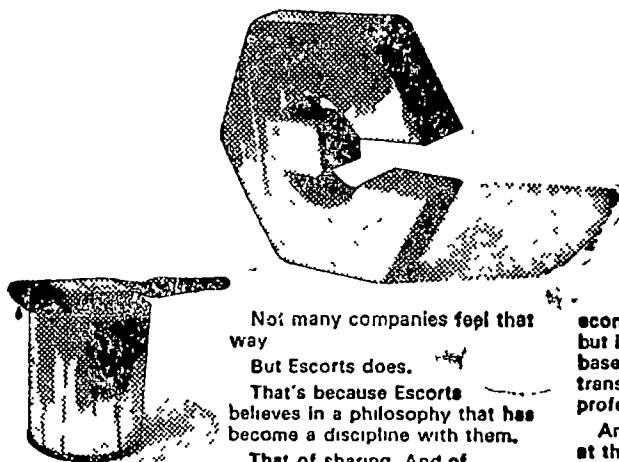
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## NEXT MONTH: THE VIOLENT PRESENT



# 249

## DEVELOPMENT DIMENSIONS

a symposium on  
new thoughts for  
growth and consolidation

symposium participants

### THE PROBLEM

A short statement of  
the issues involved

### LAND AND WATER

Subrata Sinha, Director, Environmental  
Geology Division, Geological Survey  
of India, Jaipur

### AN EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

Sri Madhava Ashish, lives in the Kumaon  
Hills in charge of the Ashram founded  
by Krishna Prem

### CONTRACEPTION

Kumudini Dandekar, Professor and Head,  
Department of Demography, Gokhale  
Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune

### THE USE OF FEAR

Sanjit Roy, Director of the  
Social Work Research Centre in  
Tilona, Rajasthan

### A COMMUNICATIONS PHILOSOPHY

B G Verghese, journalist and  
Fellow, Gandhi Peace Foundation

### THE GLOBAL PROBLEM

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# The problem

**THE** word 'development' has become a facile slogan today, an easy cushion to soften the mounting pressures on politicians who are bereft of solutions to the bewildering assortment of problems that are arising all over the world. We who are described under the label of 'under-developed' are stretching out eagerly to grasp and absorb whatever we can, oblivious of the fact that even the so called 'developed' world has burnt itself in the process. Can we avoid that and build from the base up rather than suffocate what we already have with ideas, attitudes and programmes of action which may be extremely damaging and self-destroying in the long run? This is a question we have to ask ourselves at every step of development, whether it be with regard to the building of gigantic dams which may disturb the ecology of a region, or the over use of chemical fertilizers which may wreck the soil or industrial projects which may pollute wide expanses of our earth, or



housing plans which perpetuate slum living for generations to come, or an education which leads to continuing alienation. This is not a rejection of modernization or of technology but a plea for its humanisation, for a little more care. Yes, that is the operative word. Care for our people as well who need to be taken into confidence while they are being 'developed' so that the vast reservoir of their own experience, their skills, their expertise is not obliterated in the process, lost to us for ever. All this may sound as if it belonged to the realm of the impossible, but does it need to be so? There must be people whose minds are agitated about all these priorities, and many more. This issue of SEMINAR is an attempt to express some of the ideas that are surfacing, ideas which might lead to a greater clarification of problems, to new clues, adding dimensions to our thrust towards a better future.



# Land and water

SUBRATA SINHA

IT is an admitted fact that the development of the Indian economy since independence has fallen far short of the colossal inputs of financial and manpower resources. Certainly there has been a substantial increase in technological capacity and the G N P. Yet, if the present economic situation is dispassionately analysed, the widening gap between the affluent few and the underprivileged millions would be revealed, with the overwhelming majority of the Indians still devoid of either adequate sustenance or a minimal level of social security. This is understandably leading to greater social unrest. The realisation of this anomalous state of affairs has, at long last, initiated rethinking on some of the basic issues and planning strategy for further development.

The Indian Science Congress in the 1977 session adopted the focal theme of the role of science in rural development and laid down guiding principles for survey, conservation and utilisation of resources. Dr H N Sethna, the eminent nuclear physicist, was very clear in his diagnosis:

'Superstitious beliefs and irrational outlook, lack of alertness and adaptability, general resistance to change and experiment, submissiveness to exploitation by vested interests, low standards of health and productivity, low levels of work discipline and existence of a land tenure system detrimental to agricultural advance, underdeveloped institutions for enterprise and employment, weak infrastructure of voluntary organisations, and, at the root of all these deficiencies — a low degree of popular

participation, and a rigid, inegalitarian social stratification have, time and again, frustrated our attempts to successfully undertake the task of national development..

'The detrimental effect of low level of national income, its uneven distribution, and the detrimental effect of such inequalities on the education and health of our increasing population are, I consider, the fundamental causes which have adversely affected the development of our country.'

Scientists, constituting the most highly educated sector in the country cannot evade the responsibility of playing a pivotal role in putting things straight. An analysis of the factors and solutions involved is warranted. Instances are far too numerous, encompassing almost every branch of science and technology, of deviations from scientific rationales and failures, that have led up to such an inexorable state of affairs. In the Indian context, being basically an agricultural country, land and water resources development that cover many sciences and diverse technologies, has also involved the highest expenditure in the course of the last three decades. Therefore, an analysis of this vital sphere would indeed be the most effective analysis of the malaise and malfunctioning of the Indian economy as also that of scientific inadequacies.

In the words of Raymond F. Dasmann of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, 'Long before any other form of environmental problem had appeared on earth, humanity suffered serious setbacks because of failures in the use



of land and its resources of water, vegetation and soil. Today, when problems of population, pollution, and technology receive particular and necessary attention, the wise and unwise use of land and water, soil and vegetation still deserves a foremost place in our consideration. Land and water resources are basic to the long-term survival of the human race. If their productivity is maintained, humanity can survive, regardless of the fate of civilization or high technology.

**S**uch resources form the capital assets of any nation. Fortunately, our country is endowed with some of the richest soils and agricultural lands, with an abundance of both surface and ground water resources, supplemented by a fair share of mineral resources. The territorial limits of the country include diverse natural regions, with widely variable climatic and terrain characteristics, each of which is capable of effectively contributing to India's productivity, if properly developed.

On the other hand, such variations have also created serious problems of inequalities in the distribution of both soil and water resources, both in space and time. This natural setting calls for variations in developmental strategy from region to region, and a very intimate understanding of the nuances of natural phenomena and characteristics. Sound and positive development of natural resources is only possible on the basis of this appreciation.

Frederick Engels, in his classical 'Dialectics of Nature', pronounced '... the animal merely uses his environment, and brings about changes in it simply by its presence, man by his changes makes it serve his ends, masters it. This is the final essential distinction between man and other animals,

'Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us. Each victory, it is true in the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first

'Thus at every step we are reminded we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature - but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly

'In particular, after the mighty advances made by the natural sciences in the present century, we are more than ever in a position to realise, and hence to control, even the more remote consequences of at least our day to day production activities

This statement, in fact, unequivocally expresses the main deficiencies in the effective application of scientific knowledge for planning the resources development in India. The approach so far has been sectoral, with an inordinately heavy stress on development by construction, and not by conservation, with a total disregard for the intrinsic carrying capacity of the various natural units and their suitability for particular types of human activities.

**T**he correlation between the distribution patterns of good soils, density of population and the availability of both ground water and surface water resources, as revealed by the maps of India, is indeed startling. It reveals the intrinsic natural pattern of things and also brings out the desirable limit of development of various regions. Areas with rich soils, flat alluvial plains and abundant water support populations and are ideally suited for intensive agricultural activities. Other areas, with an adverse geological setting, have steeper slopes, poorer soils, with a far lesser water potential. These areas in their natural state support much smaller populations. Not that they are wastes. They serve a vital purpose in the overall economic development of the country. Most of the mineral deposits are located in such areas, the land supports trees and natural vegetation, forming a part of the catchment that receives the rainfall, conserves the moisture in the trees and protects the soil from erosion and

provides lean season flow into the rivers

Thus, these regions, located in the upper portions of the catchments of the main alluvial areas, are a part of the mechanism of natural conservancy and conservation. The relatively gentler slope zones, at the foot of hills, as also the extensive arid and semi-arid lands of western India are the ideal locations for natural savannahs and grasslands that are capable of supporting large livestock populations, that can provide not only the entire country but also for export — meat, milk and wool. All the natural regions together are woven into a mosaic of wonderful diversity, leading to the fundamental concept of natural regionalisation in developmental planning.

Simply stated, it is the axiom that all lands cannot be used for all purposes in the interests of long term productivity and conservation of resources. Major departures from this pattern have resulted in the greatest backlashes into our developing economy. Proper and scientific evaluation of the natural resources and terrain characteristics should have been the foundation for all developmental programmes. Land use and resources development should have conformed to this natural pattern, with least deviations, while providing the various regions with the necessary scientific and technological support to accelerate the process of resource utilisation. Such environmental planning was totally absent from the Indian system.

**I**n the sphere of land use, there has been extensive increase of agricultural activities, bringing some of the marginal lands, arid tracts and hilly areas under the plough. This was accompanied by deforestation, followed by soil erosion and inevitable filling up of the rivers and streams, and even of the storage reservoirs with sediments. In the process, the rich alluvial tracts have been subjected to disastrous floods and losses. To aggravate the situation, injudicious engineering structures, in the form of inadequately designed dams and embankments have placed undesirable constraints on the river systems blocking the natural spill channels and basins, thereby impoverishing the alluvial zones from siltation.



and also enhancing the flood propensity of the system

In the arid tracts, cultivation on stabilised dunes have caused erosion and sand movement to engulf more fertile tracts, the land meant for forests and grasses has been lost, leaving the pastoral sector high and dry. Irrigated agriculture in such areas has led to salinisation and water logging, permanently rendering lands waste. Urbanisation and industrial expansion have encroached on invaluable agricultural soils of riverine reaches and constrained the natural drainage conveniences.

**W**ater management strategy has been equally unscientific. The basic tenets of the hydrological cycle have been disregarded. Groundwater and surface water, indivisible components of the water resources system of any basin, have been dealt with as separate entities, planned and executed by completely separate administrative and technological institutions. As a result, misplaced emphasis has been laid on development of either of these resources, where the other should have been utilised. This has caused colossal expenditure in providing storage and diversion systems based on costly engineering designs.

For example, the DVC command system involves the transfer of surface water from an area with hardly any groundwater to a tract that is surplus in groundwater, through more than 100 km of a large canal system. Such a transfer is not merely uneconomic, but has created water logging and drainage congestion in the lower regions. During the flood season, the natural cushioning capacity of the terrain has been lost by the imported water excess. This has aggravated flood ravages. Similarly, import of large amounts of water supplies for agriculture in regions with deficient soils of plateau and hard rock regions, has created water logging and ultimate loss of productivity of the soils due to the necessary use of excessive fertilisers for forcibly cultivating unsuitable soils. Simultaneously, economic forestry has suffered a heavy blow.

Conjunctive use of groundwater and surface water should have been the strategy adopted in most of the

areas, where both are available. It would be economical, enabling more intensive coverage by irrigation and, above all, an alternative provision for groundwater supplies in the case of delay or failure of the monsoon. Such climatic vagaries have left catastrophic effects on annual foodgrain production, had groundwater, which is available below the land in abundance even in years of drought, been an integral part of our major irrigation systems, such calamities would have been averted.

Even in the context of flood control, the obvious strategy should have been to pump heavy quantities of groundwater during the pre-monsoon season over large tracts of the irrigated Ganga plains, so that adequate sub-surface void was created to absorb the heavy precipitation into the aquifers, thereby reducing the excessive runoff into the rivers. No doubt there would have to be a greater investment on power to energise the tubewells, but it would be offset by avoiding expenditure on many major surface irrigation structures.

In fact, an immense power potential—hydro electric—of the Himalayan terrain is yet untapped. Even where groundwater has been tapped, the open wells are located on unsuitable sites, while the tubewells are often improperly designed to tap the wrong zones. Very little heed has been paid to the collection of geo-hydrological and geological information before launching most of our irrigation projects. Catchment studies to decide upon the suitability of basin development programmes has also been totally absent in the Indian planning arena.

**I**rrational land use and water applications leave a deep imprint on the socio-political framework of any region. The traditional livelihood of the people of most natural regions was 'eco-conformable', in harmony with the natural features. By introducing exotic human activities, such as cultivation in hilly areas and arid zones, etc., the people of the region are generally deprived of their livelihood, becoming ultimately landless labourers or destitute nomads, helping in the process of widening the gap between the rich and poor. The immigrant and better equipped far-

mer is able to derive maximum production from the land for a period, enriching himself, before finally altering the land to a state of irreversible degradation, with long term loss of productivity. This ultimately leads to socio-political unrest and immense economic problems.

In short, as a result of the improper land/water use policy, much of our valuable non-agricultural lands for forests and pasturages have been devoured by agriculture with very short term benefits. Had all these efforts for agricultural production been made in the rich, alluvial lands, which are yet under-utilised, the whole situation would have been totally different. On the other hand, the catchments would have remained forested, solving the problems of fuel and other forestry products, and the grasslands could provide the base for a flourishing dairy and livestock industry.

**A**ll this discussion leads to the basic issue—the failure of science and technology to help in proper planning for regional development, although India has one of the largest pools of trained and qualified scientists and technologists of all disciplines, on a global basis. Expertise, exported from India, has performed creditably; yet, it has miserably failed on home ground. The causes are not too obscure. Partly, it requires an historical analysis.

The Indian Government, after independence, continued to be guided by the values and administrative codes that were formulated by a colonial administration for deriving short term benefits by a foreign power, relegating specialists to a low key role in the affairs of planning and administration. The entire strategy of resource utilisation was geared to very short term perspectives, for 'maximising' and not 'optimising' development. Tragically, the hangover of such a policy loomed large over the Indian national scene even after the departure of the foreign power. The earlier power was transferred to vested interests and lobbies that intended to get the most out of the land for their own benefit.

The entire administrative structure, bureaucratic in its form, was utilised



for taking the necessary policy decisions for such ends. The voice of science and technology remained muted and disorganised, with the highly educated scientists becoming dogged and bogged down by complexes and frustrations. The tendencies of educated Indians, following the colonial traditions, equated social prestige with financial status and administrative power, leading to the dominance of an elitist approach towards education and social attitudes and with the obvious estrangement of the rural perspective and the millions of underprivileged

**T**he scientist and technologist in India are employed in jobs requiring the highest educational qualifications. Yet, compared to the general services for which only graduation level is required (viz, IAS, IFS, IRS, IAAS, etc), they are entitled to a much lower rate of advancement in their service career. Whereas the general services are entitled to time scale benefits and a large proportion of super time scale positions, the 'wretched of the earth' — the scientists and technologists — are subjected to squabbles and supercession on the basis of a highly irrational assessment system for a few senior posts. As a result a large number of the better intellects are wooed away for lower rated jobs, on account of their better prospects.

To aggravate matters, the multinationals and major industrial undertakings and also the nationalised banks have also made their contribution to the chaos by attracting specialists for general jobs, by offering perks and bonuses. This has caused a total waste of subsidies provided by the State for special education and training, and also created an environment of attrition and complexes between the scientists and others. As a result, the scientist and technologist is unable to give his best. The loss is, in the ultimate analysis, that of the nation, where the main props for planning and development are emasculated.

Apart from the creation of some research institutions and appointment of scientific advisers, the entire planning and developmental machinery has been guided and manned by generalists, with the scientists and

other specialists left in the outer rim. Even at the execution level, the last word was that of the bureaucrat as modified by regional political pressures and demands. Scientific viability was outlawed. From a desirable role of providing administrative support for programmes based on scientific evaluation, the Secretariat has become the focal centre of power and authority, even for development, with no arrangement for statutory participation of scientific personnel in the process. Similarly, the outdated and outmoded PWD system of execution and accounting has forced the engineer to adapt the role of an administrator, and lean heavily on archaic designs for engineering constructions, having lost his touch for engineering practices. A system should have been introduced whereby the specialist could formulate the programmes, with execution left to administrators.

**T**he scientists themselves are also the victims of a system whereby they work in isolation, in water tight compartments, with hardly any links with their counterparts in complementary disciplines. There is hardly any integration of scientific information for development. The emphasis is far more on obscure research and publications in a language that is unintelligible in the context of utilisation of scientific information for planning and development. Most of the premier research institutions adopt highly self centred policies, zealously guarding their results. As such, today most scientific personnel are immersed in the claustrophobic domain of high falutin semantics and research, with a myopic vision. As a result, science and technology in our country is atrophied as a tool for understanding nature and developing the economy.

The natural scientists alone can provide the planners with adequate terrain information in an integrated manner, that can make the projects for development viable and optimum. Such specialists are, as yet, far removed from the mainstream of national planning and development. Technology alone cannot 'pave the way for economic and ecologically conformable resource development programmes. Whether it is in the field of irrigation, flood control, erosion

abatement or checking pollution, the natural setting and conveniences have to be used first, only to be aided by additional and supplementary technological inputs. This alone can make the cost benefit ratio favourable.

**T**his will only be possible when arrangements are made for breaking down the barriers between different scientific disciplines and forming integrated interacting teams that will generate collated information, intelligible for utilisation. The leadership level of the scientific organisations have to change their present stance and encourage the doors to be opened and vistas to be enlarged. Similarly, engineering and technological organisations and departments will have to compulsorily interact with the natural scientists, including the agricultural scientist, forester, geologist, life scientists and others, before finalising their projects for regional development. The administrator will have to come down from his pedestal status, to be a partner in the task of development, strengthening the foundations of regional development. This also calls for an urgent revision of the civil service structure by introducing parity in service conditions between specialists and generalists. The Third Pay Commission's recommendations were vetoed by the Committee of Secretaries. This should not be allowed to happen. Unless the highest level of educated specialists get at least their dues from society, they cannot be expected to function in freedom and with integrity, for a common goal. The present colonial attitudes must be drastically obliterated.

Land and water resources provide the capital base for national development. Understanding this requires the interaction of diverse sciences and technologies. Therefore, once this is made possible, the major obstacles in the path of economic progress can be removed. Each natural region, endowed with particular resources, will develop uniformly by contributing its own share to the national pool of resources, diverse, but economically viable. Emphasis on an interdisciplinary scientific approach will make this a reality, and also transform the profile of science to a more positive and creative one.



# An educational approach

SRI MADHAVA ASHISH

INCREASED population in the context of a static farming technology and associated overstocking of cattle are causing severe environmental damage in the Himalayan foothills of Uttar Pradesh. If left unchecked, the consequences will be disastrous, not only to the hill population itself but also to the agrarian economy of the North Indian plains whose rivers, canal systems and hydroelectric supplies depend upon the retention and gradual release of monsoon rainfall in the mountains. If denuded mountains cease to retain rainfall, the plains suffer floods and silting during the monsoons, while in the dry season, the flow of water in rivers is reduced to a trickle. Recharging of ground water aquifers is also reduced, lowering the plains' water level, and so increasing tube-well irrigation costs and effectiveness. This process is steadily advancing.

The loose and porous nature of much of the foothill geological structure makes it well suited to absorb rainfall and so to act as a huge reservoir of subsoil water. But the same quality makes the hills highly sensitive to erosion. Properly covered by protective forest and vegetation, the U P hills are an immensely valuable

asset to the nation. Denuded, they are a menace to the entire Indian economy.

In order to check this accelerating environmental damage and re-establish adequate vegetative cover, we appear to be faced with a situation where we must either reduce the farming population's demands upon their environment, or reduce the number of people engaged in farming.

How this can best be done is the subject of several current research programmes. Here we are concerned only with the fact that any programme of reform for the purpose of saving the hills from destruction must interfere with current land use practices. This will disturb the hill population's life style and will therefore be liable to arouse resentment and opposition such that essential reforms will be obstructed and, possibly, made ineffective.

Since no land is available for resettlement of the excess hill population, and since we must rule out the brutal enforcement of reform by totalitarian methods, it should be apparent that nothing will be achieved without the willing cooperation of the hill people.



Their cooperation will not be achieved merely by telling them what they ought to or must do. Schemes for the improvement of hill agriculture have come and gone by the dozen. And though it would be untrue to say that none of these programmes has had any beneficial effect, the general attitude produced in villagers by this series of governmental schemes is one of cynical distrust.

**H**ill farming families are fully aware of their problem. Their fields do not produce sufficient grain for subsistence. Their animals do not obtain sufficient feed from hill pastures. Fodder forests are diminishing. Water supplies are decreasing. Yet, the urgency of necessity has not acted to drive families out of the hills. Some men from each family take out-side employment and send their earnings home. Women, children, old men, school dropouts, and the physically incapacitated remain at home, farm the land and graze the cattle. Money from earnings away from home allows them to eat well and dress well, and so protects them from the impact of their environmental situation.

They know that their farms do not support them, that their forests and pastures are deteriorating, and that without them they cannot survive as farmers. Yet, because they do not count the cost of their labour, any gain from the land is 'economic'. They are therefore unwilling to reduce their farming activities. Nor will they willingly change their old established cropping patterns in favour of new and unproven crops with uncertain market outlets. In effect, they know that the present type of hill farming is uneconomical, but they do not know that they are doomed if they do not change. As yet, the shadow of their doom is too distant to be seen as an immediate threat. They think in terms of next year's harvest. We, on the other hand, must think in terms of ten or twenty years ahead. We cannot afford to wait for doom to hit the hills, yet we cannot arrest the advent of doom without the cooperation of the population.

It is suggested that the way out of this apparent impasse lies in an educational programme designed to in-

crease the hill population's awareness of the issues at stake, to get them thinking along lines that, to them, are new and unaccustomed, yet inherently valid to get them to see that their unthinking expansion of cultivation has led to an unsustainable imbalance between cultivated area and the pasture-cum-forest areas which support the cultivation, that cattle numbers must be reduced if men are to survive, and that untraditional uses for cultivated areas must be devised which are consonant with the need to restore the lost balance between farm and forest. They are the farmers. They know the land. They must be involved in the decision-making processes; and to this end they must both be given a comprehensive presentation of the facts and introduced to the mental discipline which marshalls those facts and leads to an understanding of the logical outcome to which those facts are pointing. With the spread of this awareness, an atmosphere of thought may be produced both receptive to proposals for change and productive of demands for change.

If we deny the effectiveness of such an educational approach, then we are denying the effectiveness of education as such and denying mankind's capacity for rational growth. Yet it is just this capacity which distinguishes man from the animal in the struggle for survival. In the interests of our own survival in some form of democratic freedom, we must encourage hill farmers to adapt intelligently to changing circumstances.

**A** great deal might be achieved through existing hill village schools if the present education were made to cover not merely general ecology as a subject, but a specific course covering the many factors which have led to the degradation of the Himalayan foothills. This could be supported by touring lecturers, provided with films or slides for projection in schools and villages. Displays of 'before and after' photographs could also be made, showing the deterioration that has occurred over the past 75 years or so and, hopefully, examples of improvement. There is need for such displays, for children raised in the present hill

environment know neither that conditions were once better, nor that they could be better in the future. Much the same thing applies to people visiting the hills for the first time. They have seen nothing different, and so think that what they see is normal.

In this connection, the Education Department of U.P. has approved an educational experiment in the form of three questionnaires to be issued to schools in two Blocks of Almora District. In order to complete them, students will have to obtain information from their parents, thus involving whole families and, thereby, almost the whole community.

**T**he first requires information about the student's family, both resident and working away from home, their landholdings, crop yields, foodgrains purchased, numbers of cattle and their yields, cash crops, consumption of fodder leaves and cattle bedding, requirements of trees for plough replacements, buildings and fuel.

The second requires information about the student's village, its population, total area of cultivated land, areas of pasture including rights in government forests and the extent of their sharing with other villages, total numbers of animals grazed and stall fed, and details of grass farms for winter fodder.

The third requires the student to calculate the minimum area of land required to support the family, assuming that no other families have to be considered and that no outside labour will be employed. The condition is made that neither land nor forest will deteriorate under their management, so that their grandsons and grandsons' grandsons will inherit the land in as good condition.

The student must calculate the area required for foodgrains and cash crops, the number of animals required to dung the land and to produce milk, the pasture area required to maintain these animals (doubled for rotational grazing), forest area required for fuel, ploughs and buildings (allowing for regrowth of trees), and grass areas for hand-cut winter fodder.



After calculating the total area, the student is asked whether he thinks that there is sufficient land available for everyone to have so much. If the answer is the expected 'no,' he is then asked to suggest any alternative land use which, if practised by everyone, would check the present deterioration of pastures and forests, while still allowing people to gain advantage from their land.

The distribution of these questionnaires will be preceded by a seminar of principals and teachers from concerned schools and introductory teaching material will be provided.

Whether or not information gained from answers could serve as material for a survey will be seen only after collection. But this is a relatively unimportant aspect. The purpose of the questionnaires is not to collect data but to introduce students and their families to an unaccustomed way of looking at their cultivated land in terms of calculable proportions to the surrounding forests and pastures.

It could be objected that such an approach would give rise to pessimism and a sense of hopelessness. So it might. But there is a purpose in this. Steps have to be taken to counteract the illusory belief that all might be well were farmers permitted to extend their cultivation. Were this in fact to be allowed, disaster might hit the hills within the next five years. By contrast, the shocking realisation that no hope lies either in extension or in continuation of present land usage should act in favour of acceptance of reform. An effective way of inducing a person to accept a new idea is to begin by giving him a shock.

**P**reliminary trials have already made it clear that teachers are no more aware of this subject's vital importance than are their students. Environmental teaching included in standard textbooks on botany, geography, and economics, is often left for students' private study.

Excellent though this textbook material may be, it lacks the focus of a distinct subject. Nor is it directly related to the student's local environ-

ment. Lacking such a focus, and presented merely as academic study, this education cannot be expected to produce those changes in attitude towards the real environment which are prerequisite to social acceptance of essential reform.

The present thrust of educational incentive is towards academic qualifications which are acceptable as standards of employability. Teachers and students give their interest and energy to compulsory examination requirements, and ignore or belittle non-essential subjects and school projects.

**T**hese much criticised aspects of our educational system will not quickly be changed. Yet the urgency of environmental deterioration demands immediate action, both to disseminate awareness amongst hill farmers of their massive contribution to environmental destruction, and to motivate their cooperation in its correction.

How much can be achieved through the existing generation of farmers can be known only by awaiting results of current planning. Over 80% of the hill population is engaged, part time, in cultivation. It is therefore to be expected that a similar proportion of hill school students will be similarly employed when they become landholders in their own right. It is through this coming generation of farmers that we may hope to produce the maximum educational effect in terms of changed attitudes towards their environment. For, other than the schools' system, there is no comparable communications network capable of reaching the hill villages. And there is no other existing organisation capable of compelling students' attention and of achieving this educational aim at comparable cost. Furthermore, if lack of action leads to environmental destruction, the resulting social chaos will leave little significance in current academic qualifications.

It is therefore suggested that a compulsory environmental course should be introduced in all hill schools, and that this should be included in the requirements of the State Examinations Board. If this is not possible, then similarly compul-

sory sections should be attached to all present optional subjects, with distinct textbooks, distinct teaching periods, and separate examination papers. For example: Economics (Environmental), Geography (Environmental), Botany (Environmental).

**I**f such a course is to be effective, teaching methods must draw students' attention to local conditions. For this reason, text books are required which are relevant to local conditions: different textbooks to suit different areas. While it may be desirable that hill students should know that the world contains areas like the Rajasthan desert, lack of such knowledge will not kill them. On the other hand, if they do not understand the necessity for changing their local farming practices, they will certainly kill the hills. If education is to persuade them to change their practices, stress must be laid on the relevance of the teaching to their home conditions. This means laying stress on relevant practical work in the vicinity of their homes. Effective stress can be imposed only if practical work evaluation is taken into account in the State examinations system of marking.

To this end, class periods must be allotted to excursions for showing students examples of bad agricultural practices, each item being related to lecture material and to possible methods of correction.

Monthly projects should be allotted to groups of four to five students in which they should gather data about their locality — population, land area, cattle numbers, pasture loading, etc. — the results being collated and analysed in class. Such projects should, if possible, be structured to produce an impact of the programme on the adult population.

Practical environmental work done by school students is usually counter-productive in educational terms, because it is done in unfenced areas where the work is quickly undone by grazing animals. Students learn only that such work is ineffectual. It is therefore suggested that areas of one hectare or more should be allotted to each village school and that funds should be provided for their fencing.



Soil conservation, tree planting, and pasture improvement carried out by students would then remain as demonstrations of effectiveness of environmental work and of the benefits of enclosure

**A** prerequisite to recovery of the hill environment is reduction in pasture loading. This is partly achievable by substitution of lesser numbers of better cows, maintained at stall on hand-cut fodders from enclosed areas. Local tradition and absence of such enclosures prevent acceptance of such introductions. However, if each school would keep one F 2 crossbred cow on fodders grown in school compounds and from the proposed enclosures, there will be a marked educational effect on boys who will soon be managing their own cattle. Division of common pasture lands into fenced plots allocated to individual families, though expensive, appears to be one of the only realistic proposals to correct what is known as 'the tragedy of the commons' — ruinous overgrazing of commonly held pastures.

There are currently a number of research programmes being started in the hills, aimed at discovering means whereby economic returns from cultivated land and cattle could be improved, while decreasing the farmers' deprivations on the environment. These will take several years to arrive at workable conclusions, applicable to the widely differing local and altitudinal conditions typical of the hills. During these intervening years, therefore, it is to be hoped that efforts such as those suggested will be made to prepare the minds of hill men in readiness for the changes which must be made if the Indian economy is not to suffer irreparable damage at the hands of the small hill community.

For, this is no minor problem affecting only the small population of an undeveloped corner of the Indian sub-continent. The life-blood of Northern India stems from the hill rivers. Protection of the hills must take precedence even over the welfare of the hill people. If the Indian Himalayas go the way of the hills in Afghanistan and Nepal, we must say goodbye to our hopes for a better future.

Nor is the educational approach proposed in the spirit of a pious hope that mere literacy and the ability to add two and two will automatically bring well-being in its wake. It is proposed in the belief that this is a proper and valid use of the educational establishment, not stuffing men's minds with facts and theories, but opening their perceptions to the real danger into which their unthinking adherence to long established custom threatens to plunge both them and us.

The following are the kind of questionnaires suggested

### Questionnaire No. 1

Name... Village. Patti.

1 How many people are there in your family?

	Male.	Female
Above 50.		Above 45.
Between 18 to 50...		Between 18 to 45
Between 10 to 18..		
Below 10		

2 How many people are living at home and working outside?

Men	Women
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3 How many people are living and working outside?

Men accompanied by their families

Men unaccompanied by their families...

4 How much land does your family have in your village?

Irrigated... Nalis. Or how many 'hal'

Unirrigated. " " " "

5 How much land does your family have in other villages?

Village. Irrigated.. Unirrigated....

" " " " " "

6 What is your average grain crop?

Wheat.	Mota Anaj
Barley	Dal
Paddy ..	Others ...

7 How many fruit trees do you have?

Apples .. Stone fruits Nuts ...  
Citrus

8. Do you grow crops for sale?  
Potatoes What is the average crop ..

Vegetables .. " " .  
Fruit " " .  
Haldi, ginger etc. " " .

9 How many weeks/months can your family live on what it produces?

10 How much grain do you buy?

Locally  
From the market.  
From the ration shop  
..

11 How many animals does your family have?

Buffaloes in milk Cows in milk...  
Dry Buffaloes . Dry cows  
Buffalo calves .. Calves...  
Goats.. . Bullocks ..

12 How much milk do you use at home? How much do you sell?...

ghee " " " " .  
khoya " " " " .

13. How many goats do you sell in one year?..

14. In one year how many *ghattas* of green oak leaves do you bring?

15 In one year how many *ghattas* of dry leaves & pine needles do you collect?

16 In one year how many *ghattas* of firewood do you use?..

17 In one year how many *Nahara* (wooden plough shares) do you use

### Questionnaire No. 2

Name  
Name of village Patti District ..  
Year in which the village was first settled

Altitude of the village above sea level



1. How many families are there in your village?

2 What is the total number of men, women, and children living in the village all the time? .

3 How many people belong to the village but work outside and only come home on leave? .

4 What is the total area of cultivated land?

Irrigated

Unirrigated .. Total..

5 How much land is owned by people who do not live in the village?

6 How many stall-fed animals are there in the village?

Buffaloes

Cows.

Calves ..

7. How many grazing animals are there in the village?

Buffaloes .

Cows

Bullocks .

Calves

Goats Total

8 How much Banjar land has the village got

9 How much panchayat jungle belongs to the village and how many villages share the panchayat forest rights

Name of area area other villages sharing...

10 What grazing rights has your village got in the Jangalat forest?

Name of area .. area Other villages sharing rights .

11 Have you got a share in a panchayat grass farm ?

How many villages share rights on the grass?

How many *ghattas* of grass do you obtain?

### Questionnaire No 3

One hundred years ago, there were less people in the hills and there were less cattle. The people could usually grow enough to eat throughout the year, and sometimes they had a surplus which they could sell or trade for salt, cloth and other necessities. The cattle were better fed and so produced more milk

If in the present day your family had to live off the land, without any extra earnings from forest work, road work, or other outside employment, how much land would you need?

1 Your family consists of the people you have listed on the first paper. We shall assume that it will not grow any bigger.

2 How much foodgrain would you require to support them for one year?

Wheat..

Barley

Paddy.

Mota Anaj.

Dal .

3. How much unirrigated land would you need to grow this amount of grain? Nali

4 How much extra land would you need to grow fruit, vegetables, masala, and to grow enough to exchange for salt, oil, cloth, medicines, etc , and to pay the land tax? . Nali

5 The total of items 3 and 4 Nali

6 How many animals would you need to produce sufficient dung for this area of land and to produce milk and bullocks?

Buffaloes

Cows

Bullocks

Goats .

Total.

7 If there were no other families in the village, how much pasture would be needed to keep all these animals well fed throughout the year? .

8. If the pastures are not going to deteriorate with constant grazing, each area should be grazed only in alternate years, so your total requirement would be? . .

9. How big an area would you need for cut grass for winter fodder? .

10 How much oak forest would you need for green leaves?...

11 If the oak trees are not going to deteriorate with constant lopping, they must be allowed to rest for . years, so your total requirement would be

12 How many *Nahara* (wooden plough shares) would you need every year?

13 If you needed one oak tree for *Nahara* every year, and an oak tree takes 100 years to grow big enough to make good *Nahara*, how many trees would you need so that you could take one tree every year without making the forest less?

14 How many loads of dry leaves would you need for bedding for all your animals? .

15 Could you take this from the amount of forest required for items 11 and 13 without damaging the forest? . If not, how much extra forest would you need?

16. Would you need extra trees for firewood? If so, how much forest would you need so that cutting the trees for firewood be replaced by new growth and the forest would not be reduced?

17 If your family remained the same size, what would be the total area of land you would need so that you and your grandsons and their grandsons could go on living in the same way and so that the fields would remain fertile, the pastures would remain rich, and the forests would not get less?

18 With so many people now living in the hills, do you think it possible for everyone to have so much land? .

19 If your answer to No 18 is 'no', can you suggest any alternative use of the land which, if practised by everyone, would not do damage to the pastures and forests, as is happening at present, but would still allow people to gain advantage from their land?...



# Contraception

KUMUDINI DANDEKAR

THE main objective in post-independence India has been to raise the level of living. All planned effort was aimed at this and it was to be attained through increased employment, health education and social equality. At the end of 25 years' effort came the realization of what had to be surmounted before the objectives could be attained. The conditions in the country seemed far tougher and more complex than one had imagined at the outset.

Efforts to change the socio-economic conditions were thwarted by excessive population growth. Efforts at restricting population growth through family planning did not attain much success and whatever success was achieved was very uneven over the different States of the country, probably due to the different cultural as well as political scenarios in each State. The Central Government however helped the programme in all States by financing it fully as for the national programmes against small pox, tuberculosis, leprosy, malaria, etc.

But, finance alone could not make

the family planning programme uniformly popular and States such as Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir had less than ten per cent couples practising contraception by May 1975 (see Table 1). The average acceptance of contraception for India as a whole was about 16 per cent at that time. The best performing States were Maharashtra and Haryana, followed by Kerala, Gujarat, Punjab and Tamil Nadu. The rest lay between the two extremes described above.

Among the various disciplining actions introduced in India after the declaration of Emergency in June 1975, one was to give a push to the family planning programme by increasing incentives, bringing in disincentives and pressurising the general staff of the health departments into efficient action, shedding all the lethargy that had bugged the programme in most of the States. This no doubt improved the performance, raising the average acceptance of family planning in India from 15.7 per cent couples of reproductive ages in May 1975 to 23.5 per cent in December 1976 (see Table 1). Haryana went up in acceptance to 45 per cent, followed by Maharashtra with 36.5 per cent. The States of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan crossed the

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\*This article is based on a report on 5160 sterilisations in 90 villages of Maharashtra before and during the Emergency, set in the post-Emergency year, 1977.



TABLE 1

Couples protected from the currently reproductive couples in various States of India (1) before the Emergency, (2) in the Emergency, (3) 2½ years after the Emergency, during May 1975, December 1976 and June 1979 respectively

States	Percentage of couples protected by					
	Steriliza- tions	All methods	Steriliza- tions	All methods	Steriliza- tions	All methods
	Before Emergency		During Emergency		Relaxed Emergency	
Andhra Pradesh	17.2	18.1	24.4	25.6	25.7	26.2
Assam	8.5	10.2	21.2	23.4	18.9	19.8
Bihar	5.9	6.7	12.1	13.3	11.8	12.2
Gujarat	18.3	21.3	24.5	28.1	27.5	29.1
Haryana	14.4	25.6	28.3	45.1	24.0	30.5
Himachal Pradesh	7.6	9.2	23.3	26.7	21.4	23.4
Jammu and Kashmir	6.2	7.8	7.7	10.1	8.6	9.7
Karnataka	11.1	13.1	18.9	21.1	20.3	22.1
Kerala	18.4	21.4	25.6	29.5	27.3	28.4
Madhya Pradesh	11.3	13.4	22.0	24.0	20.2	21.0
Maharashtra	23.4	25.3	34.3	36.5	33.3	34.1
Orissa	14.5	17.3	21.6	23.9	23.0	24.2
Punjab	12.8	22.5	18.9	27.7	19.6	24.7
Rajasthan	5.8	7.9	13.4	15.4	11.5	12.9
Tamil Nadu	18.5	21.3	26.0	28.8	26.1	27.5
Uttar Pradesh	5.8	7.9	10.4	13.9	9.1	11.4
West Bengal	10.4	11.4	21.8	25.2	20.4	21.1
All India	12.4	15.7	20.4	23.5	19.9	21.6

Source 'Monthly Bulletin on Family Welfare Statistics', July 1975, pp 25, 26, March 1977, pp 17, 18, June 1979, pp 15, 17

percentage of 13 which was 6 or so before

Thus, the tightening of administrative efficiency improved the performance appreciably. But this itself affected the results of the elections in March 1977, throwing the current government out of power. The new government could not dare to take up the family planning programme which had been completely disrupted. The result could not be unexpected. The programme crumbled as politics entered it in a big way.

The later developments were very disheartening. Whatever achievements or motivation in planning the size of the family, these suffered a set-back, no one believing that any political set-up would be bold enough to support it. This phase was however temporary. There is a general conviction now that no government is

possible without support to a family planning programme. But are politicians prepared to commit themselves to this programme openly even in their election manifestos?

No! Not at least today!

What about the common man or the man who accepted family planning methods? Was he scared to accept it? Did he lose his motivation? Or was he only forced to take an action earlier without motivation? The answers to these questions could be sought for in two ways. One was to check the election results in March 1977 with the family planning acceptance in various States. The other was to interview the family planning acceptors and get their reactions.

Both these methods are applied in the following pages to judge the

effect of the element of force tried during the Emergency to promote family planning. As can be judged from Table-1 presented above, the major method used in family planning was sterilization. It was only in Haryana and Punjab that the non-sterilization methods were also practised to a marked degree. In fact, it was the intra-uterine device that was used in these States to more or less the same degree as sterilization. However, when one alludes to excesses during the Emergency, these are in the sterilization of the people.

It is often said that the 1977 elections to the Loka Sabha were determined by the atrocities in the sterilization programme during the Emergency. The Congress Party, i.e., the party in power during the Emergency did not get a single seat in many States such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya



Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Punjab, Delhi, West Bengal or Madhya Pradesh. On the basis of the data presented in Table 1, one may relate this to the percentage of sterilized couples in the various States. The points that strike one are.

(1) All the States were northern States that had relatively a poor performance in sterilization either before or during the Emergency with the exception of States such as Haryana and Punjab (see Table 1)

(2) The States in (1) above had improved their poor performance by about 100 per cent or so during the Emergency with the exception of the Punjab.

(3) All other States including Orissa, Gujarat and the Southern States could be called peninsular States and their performance was generally better before the Emergency and the improvement in the Emergency did not exceed 50 per cent

(4) Congress lost the elections totally in all the States that had increased sterilizations by 100 per cent or so. All the peninsular States had fully supported the Congress since the Emergency excesses of sterilization there were absent. Increasing 50 per cent sterilizations was easily possible without incurring the displeasure of the people. In other words, the performance during the Emergency could have been matched by these States even earlier if they had had the zest of a Maharashtra or a Kerala. Just a tightening of administration during the Emergency was enough to set them off.

(5) The case of Maharashtra fell slightly apart so far as the relationship between election results, Emergency excesses and the general sterilization performance in the State, was concerned. Congress won 20 seats out of 48. Nine seats went to parties other than the Janata while the Janata gathered 19 seats. Loss in the Congress vote in Maharashtra was due more to urban influence in the State, which has the highest (about one-third) urban population. The country as a whole has only one-

fifth of its population in urban areas. Cities of the size of 100,000 and more constitute 21 per cent of the population in Maharashtra. The intellectuals in such cities had a firm conviction in democratic values and they could not vote for Congress after the Emergency. If election results were the deciding factor and vote for or against Congress meant being for or against family planning (F.P.), the rural areas in Maharashtra did not come out severely against the Congress or F.P. programme.

**T**he state of the sterilization programme after relaxation of the Emergency was another indicator of the unpopularity of the programme during the Emergency. In June 1979, the F.P. acceptors in India dropped by two points, i.e., from 23.5 to 21.6. The fall in performance was more or less the same in most States. Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Orissa, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu moved up in increasing the F.P. acceptance (see Table 1), though the pace was small. Among other States there was a definite set-back, the highest collapse being in Haryana where the acceptance fell from 45 per cent reproductive couples practising F.P. during the Emergency to 30 per cent by June 1979 (Table 1). This latter protection by F.P. too was mostly due to sterilizations done in the Emergency and before.

In other words, an F.P. programme based on a reversible method such as the IUD and having brighter prospects of being adopted even in younger ages with a small number of children as in Haryana was blown off by improvident and rash handling. The motivation level for sterilization in the northern States was always low. In spite of the popularity of IUD in Punjab and Haryana, sterilizations were forced up by 90 per cent in a State like Haryana with the help of the police force, to receive a stunning fall in the programme by 1979. If IUD was popular, was it not right to have pushed that efficiently?

Maharashtra State has been one of the fore-runners of the programme for the last two decades. Still, the increase in sterilizations from 24 per cent to 36 per cent of the reproductive couples during the Emergency

totally unmade the zealous atmosphere regarding the F.P. programme in the State.

There were many factors in achieving success in F.P. in Maharashtra even before the Emergency. (i) General efficiency in administration enabling the State to run any programme relatively better. Thus, gradual development of the sterilization programme since 1959 led Maharashtra to be the forerunner. (ii) The speed of development of the F.P. programme was slow but gradual and matched the socio-cultural growth of the State all through. (iii) It was a matter of solace that Maharashtra had a necessary modicum of unified and stable government and orderly political life. (iv) The problem of minorities although there, was negligible. (v) Constant use of small incentives to promoters as well as acceptors helped administrators in pushing the programme.

All the above aspects helped the continuity of the F.P. programme in the State to protect one-fourth of the couples from child-bearing by 1975, i.e., before the Emergency. The percentage increased to 36 during the Emergency. Leaving aside Haryana, this was far above the best performance of the other States all through. Questions, therefore, always arose: 'Why is it that other States were not coming up with equal enthusiasm in F.P.?' The possible answer could be the differential administrative efficiency, the political commitment to do useful work including F.P. and health, and the presence or absence of a culture responsive to needed change befitting the current circumstances. In other words, conservative traditional values perhaps deterred the States' governments from taking up any action in the whole of the Hindi speaking belt. Similarly, the relative lower status of the female there also hindered the progress of the programme.

**T**here is however a general lethargy regarding the use of F.P. as an important tool in the reconstruction programme in the country presently and is definitely an offshoot of the Emergency excesses especially in the north. The trouble is that the atrocities of the Emergency days have not been quantified though loudly



advertised and no one knows the real level of damage done to innocent villagers in various States. Even a few cases, if manhandled, could raise hell since the manhandling is in the area of very personal physical conditioning including forced physical pain. But one lesson that was learnt during this so-called upheaval was that force in such matters as F.P. could not work anywhere beyond a given degree and much less so in the States that lagged behind.

Thus, F.P. needed a thrust — a thrust of infrastructure for instance — but not of force. In other words, there were a number of States where much else had to be done before pushing F.P. This was a great lesson learnt during the Emergency but at too heavy a cost of the complete breakdown of the programme, not only in the back-numbers in F.P. but even in the best performers.

One can hope that the present phase is temporary. But one also expects that all political parties come together at least on certain programmes such as F.P. and let elections not be fought on issues of such importance to the country. The other commitment expected from political parties is that certain freedoms of the individual cannot be played around with and people can be helped in desired directions only with constant, gradual educative processes. Crude handling of them will not assist in any way.

The case of Maharashtra, the most zealous State in the matter of sterilization with one-fourth of the couples sterilized, increased the number of sterilizations during the Emergency only by 50 per cent. The fact that the Maharashtra programme lapsed into declining acceptance of F.P. indicates that 0.8 million sterilizations done in the State in 1976 proved to be an overburden. Maharashtra in the history of its F.P. programme conducted 4.5 lakhs or even 6 lakhs of sterilizations a year by gearing all the help and cooperation of the related departments, also offering incentives to the promoters of contraception as well as the acceptors. Then why was the State not able to bear the additional burden of 50 per cent sterilizations during the Emergency?

The incentives in Maharashtra ranged from Rs 10 in 1959-60 to Rs 100\*/150 or so to the acceptor in 1976 when 8 lakhs of sterilizations were done. It seemed that increasing incentives, as well as roping in co-operation from other departments always resulted in gradual pressure on the rural population to accept sterilization. In other words *a little pressure for accepting sterilizations was a routine matter in Maharashtra* and more or less tolerated. This led the State to be too ambitious even to speak of introducing compulsory sterilization after 3 children during the Emergency. Such a step, of course, needs careful planning with a level of administration, recording and implementation with extreme efficiency unheard of in this country.

Moreover, the curtailment of the individual freedom without any support of powerful welfare programmes of health and others could not work in the democratic set up here. Special emphasis and rules for the vast poor masses having high mortality needed consideration which was beyond the capacity of any State. However, one has to admit that the ambition of this State to introduce compulsion measures though rash was not baseless. The atrocities in Maharashtra looked inconsequential even in gathering votes for the Congress in rural areas. Then did Maharashtra not use reckless force? Did it not get unpopular during the Emergency?

To answer these questions, more information on the conditions of the programme of several States was necessary. Moreover, it would help in setting targets in various States. The method of setting targets in India generally consisted of a long term goal to achieve a birth rate set by the government. The short-term annual goals were obtained by splitting the work for attaining the long-term goal into short-term annual goals, to be achieved by obtaining acceptors for contraception — especially sterilization.

The emphasis on sterilization came because a large percentage of couples in most States had more than three

children and, hence, there was no time to experiment with other reversible methods of contraception which could either fail or produce side-effects that needed individual attention and treatment. This latter was not available to most of the States. An estimated number of contraceptors were to produce a decline in birth rate which was prejudged on the basis of data often not very accurate, reliable or covering the variety of cultures in the country. Actually, targets should be under constant review for both implementation of the programme or revision of it in the light of past performance, future plans and new developments.

Target setting has never been a utility-oriented exercise in this country. Targets were set without any insight into the possibilities of achieving them. They seemed attractive slogans like so many others of their kind. They had no relation to reality. When the impossibility of attaining the long-term target was clear, the short-term targets were often changed. But these short-term targets had no relation to actual performance, nor were the short-term targets meant to be attained. When they were not attained, no adjustments were made anywhere either in the management or the targets themselves. One could rarely understand the reasons for their existence in such circumstances. If one compares the actual performance in any year to the target set for the following year either in the matter of sterilization or total family planning practice in the States, one rarely sees any scheme or relationship in it.

The idea of setting no targets is not acceptable to any responsible administrator. If financial liabilities for F.P. are with the government, there has to be some method of accounting or auditing so that the funds provided to the States can be justified. It is worthwhile going through the performance of each State for the past two decades to judge the size of target that should be set for it.

For instance, in a State like Maharashtra, a target of 300,000 to 400,000 sterilizations has been easily attained as seen from the past. A new vigour to the programme

\* Rs 150 if sterilized after one child, Rs 100 after two children and Rs 75 for others.



through added incentives has raised the number to 5 or 6 lakhs which therefore seems the upper limit of the target that should be set for the State, at least for a few more years. The achievement of 8 lakhs of sterilizations was too much and really was not even expected of Maharashtra. But it did so by getting overzealous and stepping up its limits. The results were not bad. But the discussion on possible introduction of compulsion in Maharashtra itself led to an insecure and fearful atmosphere which was intensified by the sadistic tales of atrocities in the northern States. The northern States did not produce much improved results but they produced tales of atrocities during the Emergency. These built up an atmosphere of panic resulting in the complete breakdown of the programme even in the peninsular States which did not have any acute Emergency sickness.

**F**rom the discussion above one could easily conclude that a target of more than 5 lakhs should not be tried in Maharashtra — at least for the next 5 years. Similarly, there is no need of putting the target lower than 4 lakhs. Such decisions could be taken on the basis of the histories of the various States. There is also another examination to which the contraception and sterilization histories of States should be subjected. It should consist of the reactions of couples to the F P programme during the Emergency days. In all the States of the country, the F P programme during the Emergency improved by 50 to more than 100 per cent in just one year. If there are States where it could be done without much complaint from the people, then that performance could help to set the targets in the respective States obtainable by only tightening administrative efficiency.

Here one can differentiate between lethargy in administration to get things done and aversion of people to accepting contraception. Such examination was conducted in Maharashtra by interviewing 5160 sterilized couples in 90 villages of 14 districts. The results are educative and worthy of trying elsewhere. The aim was to interview 5826 couples sterilized from these villages. But since seven/eight years had passed

only 5160, that is, about 88 per cent of them could be interviewed.

It is really laudable that only 12 per cent could not be contacted and had to be explained away. This is emphasized because occasionally a suspicion is raised about the validity of the numbers of reported sterilizations. The reactions of the contacted couples to the sterilization programme therefore represented the rural response to F P as seen below.

A questionnaire was addressed to 5160 couples, seeking information from the interviewed on: year of sterilization, whether vasectomy or tubectomy, sex, age, numbers of living and born children at steriliza-

tion during the Emergency. In the report of Maharashtra, almost half of the sterilized were illiterate. It is no wonder since all our sterilizations were from villages only. About 54 per cent sterilizations were conducted before the Emergency and 46 per cent during the Emergency. The average number of living children to those sterilized before the Emergency was 4.4 while during the Emergency it declined to only 4. About 35 per cent of all the sterilized had three or less children. Among 5160 sterilized, 20 had no living child, 61 had only one. Others had a reasonable number of children according to even their own definitions of reasonability. Answers to the question 'Was your sterilization voluntary?' are given below.

<i>Kind of answers</i>	<i>Percentages</i>		
	<i>All calendar years</i>	<i>During emergency</i>	<i>Before emergency</i>
Voluntary	70	52	85
Under some pressure or likely future action of Government	15	24	6
Involuntary	15	24	9
Total	100	100	100

tion and at the time of interview, sex-composition of the living children, the voluntary or non voluntary character of the sterilization, troubles after sterilization, medical treatment sought and received, reaction to government policy of introducing compulsory sterilization, repentance or otherwise for the sterilization.

Since in rural Maharashtra and most rural areas of the country sterilization was mostly the method in practice, not much data were collected on other methods of F P.

The interviews were conducted from February 1977 to December 1977, i.e., the period following the relaxation of Emergency. The whole investigation was thus carried out in the hot climate of the anti-Emergency and anti-sterilization days. Sterilization was as is well-known the deciding factor in the free elections of March 1977. With this setting for the enquiry there was bound to be bias in reporting, especially when the new regime was promising compensation for the harm caused, loudly advertising the atrocities done during

One had to accept a bias in reporting due to the peculiar climate of those days. A real look at the core-reaction can be had by their complaints against sterilization in later pages.

More detailed reactions can be seen from the accompanying Table 2. There were 15 per cent pressurized into sterilization even before the Emergency — Maharashtra had already played the game of mild force probably during the famine days. Hence there was perhaps not much room for greater pressure tactics in Maharashtra during the Emergency. These tactics were perhaps used far more guardedly by other States such as Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu for the first time during the Emergency and so they could increase the number of sterilizations by 50 per cent during this period as judged from the election results. In these States, the Emergency probably meant only the tightening of rules or efficiency and therefore could be tolerated by people. Maharashtra however went



TABLE 2

**The variety of answers to questions on the voluntary character of the sterilized among the 5160 couples**

<i>Whether sterilization was voluntary</i>	<i>Before emer- gency</i>	<i>During emer- gency</i>	<i>All years</i>
<i>Yes, it was voluntary</i>			
(a) Highly motivated, having 2/3 children	22 6	20 1	21 5
(b) Motivated, having 4 or more children with one son, sterilized after 1970	2 7	4 1	3 3
(c) Motivated, having 4 or more children, with two or more sons sterilized after 1970	31 0	24 3	28 0
(d) Motivated, having 4 or less children sterilized in 1970 or earlier	8 9	—	4 9
(e) Motivated, having 5 or more children, sterilized in 1970 or earlier	15 4	—	8 4
(f) Got operated to get the incentive money	4 0	3 0	3 5
(g) Operation was necessary	0 4	0 3	0 4
<i>No, done under pressure</i>			
(a) Accepted because of the possible future compulsion	4 4	19 5	11 2
(b) Feared to get operated, but now favourable	1 9	5 0	3 3
<i>No, it was involuntary</i>			
(a) No necessity of operation, but still got operated	2 8	2 2	2 5
(b) Compulsion, with one or no son	1 4	6 5	3 7
(c) Compulsion, with two or more sons	4 5	15 0	9 3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 0 =2829</b>	<b>100 0 =2331</b>	<b>100 0 =5160</b>

far ahead more ambitiously during the Emergency which made people revolt against the programme.

Whenever there is force, it is unlikely that it can be uniform for all classes. It is easier to force the down-trodden and they became victims of the Emergency.

According to the sterilization survey, intermediate Hindus and depressed classes were the aggrieved community forced into sterilization to the extent of 13 per cent or so during the Emergency. Their percentage in the general population was about 11. However, the uproar against sterilization was not very high among them, probably because people were already used to mild pressures even before. Muslims were however found distressed to an exceptional extent. They complained about compulsion

to the extent of 31 per cent. It is worth noting that their percentage among these rural areas was five and a half while the sterilizations among them were only four and a half per cent.

On the other hand, the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes were about 11 per cent in the general rural population while among the sterilized their percentage was 20. Only 13 per cent among the complainants of force belonged to these communities. The case of Muslims and depressed or backward classes is therefore analysed below.

The most complaining community was that of Muslims (31 per cent) who reported pressure put on them for sterilization during the Emergency. In all the studies done in this

country, Muslims are always found to have higher fertility than others. They are also found to have less inclination to accept F.P. During 1968 to 1978, for any year their acceptance of F.P. in various studies over the country was about 6 per cent while their numbers constituted 11 per cent or so. The numbers of living children were also observed to be larger among their contraceptors than among others. Their exceptional percentage complaining against sterilization therefore only speaks for their exceptional behaviour and attitudes towards F.P.

This has been noted in many other situations in several parts of the country even before the Emergency and it is therefore not impossible that the Muslims were subjected to pressures from the surrounding society to bring them in line with others. One can of course see that force is not therefore the answer for such unwillingness nor does it work. But the Muslim leaders should take up this issue and guide their followers properly so that their attitudes generally conform with those of others.

The large number of sterilizations among the intermediate Hindus and poorer classes in general could be due to (i) genuine realization of its need among them due to poverty, (ii) sheer attraction of incentives either because of poverty or because they included problem persons such as drunkards, etc., (iii) force employed by the administration to attain ambitious targets.

Attitudes of rural people towards the introduction of compulsory sterilization were assessed. The word compulsion or force did not seem to frighten the people. It was probably because they had never known what compulsion or force meant. In a country like India, inefficiency in administration has been found to be a hopeful factor in situations of even compulsion. About two-thirds of the interviewed rural people were found favourable to compulsion or some kind of pressure, of course, after a variety of conditions were satisfied. The conditions included the need of a son or two among the children.

One is really surprised at such a large proportion approving of some



kind of pressure for sterilization. This, perhaps, can be explained in many ways (a) The propaganda for sterilization or F P during the earlier twenty years or so (b) The acceptance of it by a substantial percentage of upper castes who probably compared themselves with others having similar number of children but not practising F P in spite of poverty. But, one must remember that almost all Hindu castes, even the lower ones, were more or less for pressure to promote sterilization (c) Confidence that compulsion could not harm them (d) Lack of basic sympathy towards other caste-fellows who were likely to be aggrieved under oppressive conditions (e) A feeling of distrust about the Muslims who did not participate much in the F P programme in most regions of the country.

The complaints among the poorer classes such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and backward classes seemed genuine because except for the aggrieved ones, the rest conformed to the views of most of the other rural populations. This is worth noting. Such groups did not fall apart culturally except often by their poverty. They therefore did not seem an alien group like some others.

The above kind of observations if available for various States, would make it easier for administrators to administer the F P programme in them. They could identify the hurdles of the programme. While there is no need of harping on the need of restricting the population growth in this country, the priorities have also to be borne in mind. High infant mortality, low female literacy, low status of the female in the household or society, are all deterrents to the family planning programme. Efforts to reduce the force of these deserve high priority in all the States and especially so in north India.

There is urgent need to tackle the problem of poverty of the poorest sections of society that live below subsistence level. In their case, unless a minimum income guarantee is there, it is impossible to expect any cultural change. This can be effected by launching programmes such as the Employment Guarantee scheme tag-

ing the Food for Work programme on to it. Unless such schemes are launched there is no hope whatsoever of either organizing the rural people or educating them for a given purpose. This is a separate problem, but as urgently needed to be tackled as the family planning programme in the country. Thus, eradication of poverty and family planning should go hand in hand.

To run any such programmes smoothly with success, one needs commitment from all political parties. There should be no two opinions at least on programmes that remove poverty or popularize the family planning programme. Unless this exists, the dream of raising the level of living will be shattered.

The 1981 census will soon reveal what has been the success of the various regions of the country in reducing the natural increase of population. Before the Emergency, at least the peninsular States were moving gradually towards the desired goal. Except for Maharashtra, other States in this region did move guardedly during the Emergency and there is no reason why they should not move ahead even now at least at the same pace. As is evident from the data in rural Maharashtra, people are prepared to limit the sizes of their families. What is needed is a diplomatic, guarded approach and sustained effort on the part of administration to promote F P. Political leaders also must be knowledgeable and capable of putting such programmes above party politics.

In Maharashtra the present lethargy is only temporary as can be judged from the above reactions. People there have been trained during the last 25 years to recognise the need of a small family norm. One therefore may venture to say that peninsular India at least should attain the desired goal of 30 births per thousand of population by 1984. It means the need of 40 to 45 per cent couples of reproductive ages practising contraception. It is no doubt difficult, but not impossible. The Hindi belt of northern India however seems a problem region, at least for the moment. But can peninsular India not lead the movement for family planning?



# The use of fear

SANJIT ROY

IT will be some time before the voice from the village is heard. At this rate perhaps never. It is strange how this feeling of sheer impotence to explain, to make sensible people understand about the real problems of the people in the rural areas also gives one a heavy sense of responsibility not so much to one's work as to the people one is trying to work with. Where does anyone begin to explain? With crucial issues and questions? With success stories? With failures within the system? With schemes and ideas and statistics? It will be the death of us, I tell you. We have heard so much of all this that it is not funny. Of course the most dangerous sign is our total inability to learn from previous mis-

takes and every year we come up with the same scheme, the same idea, the same concept worded differently. And we pat ourselves on the back for the ingenuity of the whole thing. Yet it is the same. There is no difference. Call it what you will, push the novel idea through a different department if you must, recruit a new bunch of 'dedicated' (committed?) bureaucrats to man it from the top and it is going to make little difference. No one seems to know the reason why. Or if they do they are keeping mum about it.

I cannot accept it as ignorance. The only other explanation is that these experts lack courage and integrity. They lack the guts to live in the



village They would rather be the collectors of second and third hand information from their inferior colleagues in the district and then claim it as their own experience This is acceptable Still they are so far away from the actual facts, their observations are so remotely connected to the truth that one wonders how long we are going to keep deceiving ourselves, how long we are going to hide behind figures? 'With an infant's pulling force they swayed on a rocking horse and thought it pegasus' —D.H. Lawrence on the Romantics

**I**n rural development we are basically Romantics We are not prepared to face realities We achieve little and then blow it out of proportion and in the process we are unwilling to face the slightest criticism We multiply the ideas in our dream, in our plans because it looks best there In any case it hurts nobody even if it is proved wrong What none of our hot shot bureaucrats want to do is be around when the plan is being implemented in the field If the results are disappointing what then?

The easiest thing in this convenient system is to find scapegoats and you can take your pick from the sub-divisional level downwards to the gram sevak and the *patwari* But they are no chickens they have survived political and administrative pressures and they are masters in getting out of tricky situations Their position also allows them to act as effective sluice gates the system of feedback, of community opinion on ongoing programmes in their area is kept under very tight control with the help of the dominant minority Whatever information is allowed to escape upwards must be music to someone's ear — or look sharp.

Thus, what we read in various reports and studies, in projects and schemes, in related plans and other documents suggests that there is nothing to worry about putting the responsibility in government hands When we hear our intelligentsia (and social workers, at least some of them) hold forth on rural development, it is not possible to miss the leave-it-to-us and just-a-question-of-time sort of cockiness, a masterly attempt in 'psycho-ing' people into

complacency with a liberal use of figures In human terms it means damn all but it is a way of silencing questions. It is a way of smothering dissent It is a way of turning a blind eye to other critical issues that need attention but no one is prepared to face them because it invites criticism and ridicule.

The first rule is to appear successful on paper. It is the bureaucracy's responsibilities to do so and in the process hide a lot of accumulated sins. It is one large joint family, the government, where the outsider is the last man, the beneficiary He is a forgotten entity in this grand scheme of things entirely designed for his own welfare, if you please The final touch of irony executed with much finesse is that this last man is supposed to be grateful — and show his gratitude — for having received non-existent financial assistance (the money goes to someone else his condition by and large remains the same) and moral support

Under the benevolent eye of the District Collector, the district officials, the SDO, the BDO, the sarpanch, the gram sevak all looking very kindly at him when asked to speak openly and freely and complain if need be, we can expect this poor man hemmed in from all sides and feeling as if the end of the world has almost come, so say the bit they would like to hear and buy his peace But if he should use the slightest word out of place, if he should even hint that all is not well with him when the tamasha is over, he is literally hounded and harassed His life is hell and in very unsubtle ways he is informed he insulted the officials, the image of the village, the sarpanch and the members (in that order) by speaking openly against the programme in public He is branded if and when he goes to the Block office or the sub-divisional office for some work he is reminded of his indiscretion and he is not 'only made to feel like a leper, but his work is not done So much for feedback So much for community involvement So much for the development of the rural poor

**T**he development process that we firmly believe in is the process of intimidation It is a question of force

not faith. The rural areas reek with fear of possible consequences if irregularities are reported against petty officials, against sarpanches, against two-penny politicians I do not think it is possible to convey this terrific feeling of fear adequately It has broken the back of many small and marginal farmers, rural artesans, scheduled castes, harijans, agricultural labourers and women They will speak to you silently and confess and confirm all sorts of horrific happenings but in public they will not only remain silent but it is quite possible that they will turn hostile and you will not know what hit you.

In government eyes this is a severe indictment You have been working in this village for so many years and yet you have not been able to win the hearts of the people in this village, what sort of social worker are you? If so many people are against your programme what have you been doing? How does one answer these questions, indeed, must they be answered? In contrast there will not be a single man, most likely, in the village who will speak out against a teacher or a gram sevak, a sarpanch or a primary health centre doctor: does that mean they are more successful in providing a service, in involving communities? Does opposition indicate failure or the beginning of change? Which is preferable? Here lies the basic fundamental difference

**I** think any programme which has the full support of all the various sections of a village community from the very beginning is a failure because it is not conducive to the sort of change we are looking for, the attitudinal change that is a fundamental prerequisite in any process of development I would look at my programme again and see what makes it so harmless, so agreeable to all and why it should generate no discussion But not so the government Their primary purpose is to identify a programme that is acceptable to all in which case the maintenance of the status quo is absolutely essential No one gets hurt, no one suffers, no one criticises the programme — at least no one of any consequence and this is taken to mean that it has the full involvement of all the communities in the village This is the last word in development With no feedback,



with opposition being suppressed (if there should be any opposition of any kind) and all reports good and rosy, what is there to worry about?

**I** have come to believe that criticism or opposition in government interpretation is tantamount to failure. No educated person is allowed to prove a failure. It is not done. What will the natives think? This is one reaction. Second, the failure of any programme/project means the funds have been misused. In government circles anyone who concedes he has failed is not only inviting trouble and severe scrutiny, but giving freedom for tongues to wag like hell. Generating opposition at the village level as a result of a programme actually being implemented for the rural poor is taken as a failure: not getting the support of the gram panchayat to any project for the poor is considered a failure. It is taken for granted that the gram panchayat members are very enlightened people who are just dying to help the rural poor. If the project is implemented without their patronage, in due course word gets around that money has been embezzled. No wonder the government servant is petrified of being dubbed a failure: he must have done something right. The project must have hurt in the right quarters. But these sorts of projects are not encouraged.

On the one hand the front line government functionaries — the primary school teacher, the patwari, the doctor, the nurse, the gram sevak, the *thanedar* and the cooperative inspector — are called change agents (very fancy name) on the other, they are not supposed to initiate change for fear of rocking the boat, of attracting attention. Economic change is desirable — that too without controversy: change of any other kind is not their objective at all. Identifying marginal farmers and making a comprehensive list is development: giving them loans is development. The fact that the buffalo changes hands and has been given to a Jat because the milk from a scheduled caste's hand is not drinkable is none of their business. It is not their concern if the laws are being violated on untouchability, child marriage, bonded labour, minimum wages: any change however insignificant if even

suggested is likely to blow up in their faces, so it is conveniently avoided. Fear prevents them from reporting these violations. And no 'change' agent is likely to take kindly to any villager who insults him by asking him to observe the law.

It is this fear of being proved wrong that confines our wonderful scientists, with all sorts of gadgets and methods, to within the four walls of the universities. None of them have the guts to try it out in the village, show it to the people and learn from what they have to say. It may well be that the villagers will laugh at it. It is quite likely they will have a dig at the scientist and his inventions or at the new method he recommends, but it is the beginning of a dialogue. The significant part is that they are meeting without intermediaries but the expert feels humiliated if he hears an illiterate villager making disparaging remarks to his friends about what he holds dear. It makes this so called educated man wild to think that a primitive man like this could have the gumption to criticise. It is only the right of the degree holders, the professors, the Ph.D. holders to be superior, act as if God and brains were on their side. Everyone else should just be silent and listen to their pearls of wisdom.

**I**f a solution is to be found in any rural development programme, an intellectual solution is always preferred to a practical one. A professor from some university is asked to examine the problem: never a Block development officer who might have the answer right away. But we go through this ridiculous charade of getting hold of an impractical professor at tremendous cost who then goes to the Block development officer, gets the answer, and then when the report is written and ready one notices the expert taking the credit for the whole idea. Of course, everyone who reads it is ecstatic over the simplicity of the solution: what would they do without this eminent intellectual? Bullshit. It is a racket. We talk of complete and insufficient information/figures and that there is a need to collect more 'reliable' data for planning purposes. Where do these high powered universities and research institutes go to collect 'reliable' data — to the men and women

in the villages to the gram sevaks? They go to the Block office and write down the figures as the BDO has collected them as a result of some obscure circular but no one is interested in a BDO and his figures. So it waits in the Block until some professor strolls in to make the figures reliable.

This man is the most impractical of persons going. But he is a part of a tradition which in effect strengthens the fallacy that (a) his degree makes him practical and wise, (b) he is the only person who can solve it, (c) he is always right, (d) it is not his business to dirty his hands by changing a spare wheel for instance, he must be feared and respected for all he knows. He belongs to a calibre above normal human beings—at least in the villages. And this position is exploited and abused to the full. The primary school teacher is a political force in the village and he wields tremendous power because he controls the written word. Ever seen him running a primary school? Runs it by putting the fear of God into the kids. There is no such thing as persuasion, gentleness or understanding. Learning is a serious business so no one is to laugh and joke and act normally. Development by fear: it is the system.

In the final analysis, the need to intimidate people into performing their duties (that, too, shabbily) can be traced back to an alarming lack of self confidence, of ignorance, of personal integrity and of enthusiasm to want to learn from others socially inferior to them. A doctor in a primary health centre has many responsibilities but because he could well be incompetent and lacking in self confidence he chooses to ignore them and take out his frustrations on his patients. It is clearly written on his face, what a dump to land up in, imagine me stooping to this level, what have I done to deserve this? He takes it out on the people.

**T**he professional doctor, teacher, engineer and social worker is scared of being proved wrong and being laughed at and he hides this by intimidating the rural people — the beneficiaries. The front line government functionary stripped of all power ostensibly vested in him by



the government, shoved around to perform all sorts of unconventional duties for which he gets nothing in return, has to put the fear of God into the rural poor to keep them in line: this he does quite effectively by aligning himself with the money-lenders, the exploiters, the rich farmers and the petty politician (he is a part of the rural mafia) who provide him the clout to keep everyone quiet. In the process he gets the social status the government can never give him and the respect he would never earn otherwise. For the patronage he receives from the rural oligarchy, his job involves snuffing out of harmful criticism, control of free discussion, channeling of funds from different schemes for scheduled castes, coming through the co-operatives for instance, for their own welfare and using government agencies — the law and order, the revenue — to settle enmities once and for all.

**T**he village of Tilonia is controlled by one family. The eldest member of the family working in the Krishi Upaj Mandi Samiti, it is said embezzled about Rs 2 lakhs and financed the youngest to become an MLA. The former has been suspended but the latter has ensured that the case is quashed. The second brother is the sarpanch and the member of the village cooperative society and also of the Kre Vikre Sahakari Samiti. It is an open secret that he has taken money to the tune of thousands but there is no one in the village with guts enough to say so. Our MLA friend has taken a Rs 20,000 loan from the bank and for the last three years has refused to pay it back. What is the bank going to do about it? He does not care if his name is mud with the institutional credit agencies. It does not worry him that the loans of the Antodaya families in our area in Rajasthan are not being processed because he has recommended them. All that he is concerned with is his hold on the people based on fear and that his image of invincibility is not shattered. Which is why he goes berserk when he hears about us and the power and the connections we have to be able to expose him. He is being slowly stripped of his influence in the area because every day that we are there is a reflection on his diminishing power.

We are voters in Tilonia. In the last election we put up a candidate because we thought through the democratic process we wanted some one in the panchayat who could plead our cause. It sent ripples through the entire village and they resorted to all sorts of intimidating means to defeat our doctor candidate. She went to each one of the 250 families and each one of them had come to her with some medical problem or other. But they all said — we love you, we cannot do without you but we have to give the vote to the other chap because we have to live in the village, we have nowhere else to go. Our critics would say, 'You have worked there 6 years and you cannot get 250 people to support you, what sort of work have you been doing?' Yes, indeed. The difference is in the process. It is easy to intimidate 250 families and manipulate them according to anyone's wish — this is the recognised way of developing the rural poor. But to get to know them, earn their confidence, adopt a longer and much more difficult process through education, understanding and mutual respect which is more lasting in the long run is what we feel is the answer. But how does one convey these ideas to a narrow minded bureaucrat? We would much rather he misunderstood.

**B**ut it takes its toll. I am convinced many people do not realise the absolutely cock-eyed structure of the administrative system which encourages the process of intimidation. The system has decreed that fear is the only way schemes can be implemented, communities can be mobilised, projects can yield results and the rural poor can be developed. There is literally no other way if you do not want to be accused of wasting government funds and facing audit objections. Much better to pile up the figures and show how beneficial the project has been. Write to the President of India that there is some hanky panky going on and who should turn up 6 months later but the same old *thanedar*. Write to the Prime Minister that there is corruption in the ranks and we have evidence to prove it and who should appear with a benign look on his face but the same SDO you are

complaining about to 'investigate' into the matter, being a responsible civil servant. Write a letter to the Chief Minister about the poor state of the Antodaya programmes in the area and get an inquiry started because certain irregularities have been noticed and who should be writing the first report in the field — the very man you are complaining against.

Complain to the District Collector and the DC sends down the same letter to the person who is supposed to be censured and he brings it to you and shows you how the system works. He proves it will never change and he will always have the last laugh. Any report that goes out of the locality on any topic is scrutinised by this group of people at the sub-divisional and Block level who have to be friendly for their own survival: you scratch my back I scratch yours.

There is no parallel system of independent scrutiny to see if the complaint is genuine or not. So when you see the same letter to the Chief Minister in the hands of the same crook you are complaining against, then it makes you wonder who you can appeal to, to improve the situation? What sort of development can take place if everything is in the hands of these unscrupulous people and they are not answerable to anybody? How can things change if the rural poor are not allowed to speak out or even write to the government on top, if the same person, corrupt to the core, has been deputed to investigate his own misdeeds? They know that the first report, the report from the field decides if not influences subsequent decisions taken by DCs, Secretaries and Ministers. He is the important person, the rest are tools, willing tools by the looks of it, because the normal run of bureaucrats would hardly disagree with the conclusions of a report from the field. Which one would take the trouble to investigate how factual the report is?

**W**e have institutionalised fear as an input in development. Human development in the villages can only take place through the use of fear and force because we have taken it for granted that the villagers cannot



take any decisions on their own and whatever decisions they take are not good for them. This is not an exaggeration; it is a real problem and I feel the first problem to be tackled if we seriously want human development to take place. This man at the village level holds such a crucial place and yet the importance we give to this man is so negligible that it is nothing short of criminal. He is so neglected that he has the freedom to misbehave. He is agent for the landowner first and gram sevak next. He is brother of the moneylender first and primary school teacher next. His loyalty is first to the community and the family and then to the government. The government gives him his pay only, which in any case is a pittance, but his family and his community give him the security, the social status and the identity that is so important in the village. His alignments in the village give him the power to do good and to do evil. This same man is the first to claim that as a government servant he is not allowed to dabble in politics: appearance is all. But he is a powerful political force to reckon with. He has the influence to break the law and get away with it. He has the power to use the law for his own selfish ends and spread enough fear to quash all opposition, all dissent and make his superiors believe that all the programmes under him are being run with the cooperation of the community.

**W**hat cooperation? There is no such thing. The policy makers, the bureaucrats are being led to believe a myth. Strengthen cooperatives they say: it is the answer to India's problem. Marginal farmers in many villages are told (it is a decree) that they are members and they keep silent over it because it is one more fix for the richer farmers to use government funds. Rural artesans and scheduled castes have fictitious loans taken in their names from engineered cooperative societies. It serves a dual purpose. Richer farmers can buy the odd animal or build the extra room they need with this loan and government statistics show that the poorest of the poor have actually been helped.

Since the system of feedback is well controlled, hardly any of this

nonsense reaches the top. And when it does there is no way of bringing the criminals to book. How are loans repaid in village cooperative societies, do you know? This is another fix. It is just a book adjustment from one financial year to the next and villagers have not paid back their loans for years especially the better off farmers. Who is going to stop them, the cooperative inspectors? That is a laugh because they themselves are implicated in this massive fiddle.

**T**he unwritten terms of reference for survival where the lines are clearly demarcated is based on fear. The government functionary at the village level fears he will lose his social status and his image: the rural poor fears he will lose his life not to mention his security (exploitation evidently also has its good points for want of a better alternative) if he does not observe the rules of the game. The bureaucrat on top is petrified of taking any controversial decisions. It is one constant battle to avoid being bold and risk the possibility of being mentioned in the State Assembly. To show courage is to be foolish: to support any sensitive programme is to be rash because it can easily jeopardise your career later on. Development is in the hands of these people: strategies, policies and entire projects costing crores have been put in the hands of these spineless people who have no firm views of their own and decisions depend on the hysteric ravings of maybe one politician. It is just incredible how irresponsible statements could affect government policy, terminate programmes and no one has the ability to take a stand, because they are scared of criticism.

I mention these disturbing symptoms in the development administrative system just to show how negative attitudes have spread like a cancer into our whole way of thinking. Those who, I am sure, are likely to pass off my observations as exaggerations have little or no experience in being at the receiving end. But it is there, the fear is there, total and absorbing, and at the rate we are going we will never be able to get rid of it. I like to think I have made a beginning here by at least speaking out and explaining the situation as it is.



# A communications philosophy

B G VERGHESE

COMMUNICATIONS are to society and civilisation what the nervous system is to man. The evolution of languages, writing, printing, the telegraph, photography, radio, modern telecommunications, television, the computer, and satellites are landmarks in human development. Each of these more or less changed the world and introduced a new milieu. Laser communications, optical fibres, large scale integrated circuits, and space platforms will soon be current modes and not just science fiction.

The pace of invention has quickened and recent years have witnessed an astonishing revolution in communications and electronic systems

which truly signify the birth of a new information era marked by the rapid growth of informatics or the combination of computers, data transmission and telecommunications capabilities. Access to this era is by no means universal owing to the uneven levels of development and technology that prevail between and within nations. Since communications is both an instrument and a product of development and technological advancement, it is no surprise that developing societies are disadvantaged in this regard.

Information is power. Hence the need to democratise communications so that knowledge is free, the creative spirit of man is not curbed, inquiry is encouraged, and rulers are held accountable by a vigilant and informed public opinion. This much is

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\*Originally, an extension lecture delivered at the Osmania University Diamond Jubilee, April 1979.



well understood. But it is only beginning to be recognised that communications is a resource as much as education. It is an essential bridge for the transfer of technology and must be regarded as a vital input in development

Information systems connote far more than the media. Communications, in turn, is a wider concept than information. The media essentially purview news of contemporary events. Information, concerned as it is with a wider stock of knowledge and ideas, is generally a one-way flow, often top-down from custodians to clients, decision-makers to people, elites to the mass. Communication inherently implies lateral as much as vertical, two-way or circular flows that make for dialogue and exchange at and between all levels. The democratisation of communications with a higher degree of access and participation presupposes both a more open or democratic society as well as a more developed one. In centralised, feudal and developing societies communications and information systems tend to be restricted, and access and participation is a privilege rather than a right.

In developing societies, access to communications as to much else is largely confined to urban elites. The infrastructure is limited and service charges are high. A telephone call for instance costs more in India than it does in the United States. So does a television set. Newspaper circulations are limited at the threshold by literacy and also by cost. A monthly newspaper subscription bears a far higher proportion to monthly family income in India than in a corresponding American family budget.

The pattern of India's development over the years since independence, based as it has been on large, lumpy investments in industry and infrastructure and less on human development, is necessarily reflected in the structure and nature of national communications. The newer thrust in favour of rural development, a minimum needs charter, and greater decentralisation in programme formulation and implementation dictate a different approach to communications

If developing societies are to be moved along the path of modernisation, they need more and better communications — for social and political mobilisation, national integration, learning, social education and extension, democratic societies must also educate their electorate through the widest possible dissemination of information which is the most potent means of rendering accountable their elected representatives and others in authority over them. An informed public opinion can only be built on an unrestricted and credible flow of information that makes available contrasting views and does not stifle dissent

If communications is an input in development and an essential element in modernising and democratising societies, can or should it be subject to policy planning? The idea is worrying to some, as anything in the nature of a communications policy would appear to carry with it the seeds of censorship and possible restraints on a vital freedom — the freedom of information and the more recently articulated right to communicate. This is an exaggerated fear, for there is no necessary connection between policy planning with regard to the medium and even the dissemination of the message and control over message content. Measures to ensure wider diffusion have more to do with access than with censorship. Certainly things can go wrong. But if they must, this can happen irrespective of the existence of a communications policy

On the other hand, the very growth, range and versatility of modern communications and the possibility of assembling it in varied combinations and systems with diverse capabilities vests it with an overarching importance. The development of communications systems has implications that bear on investments, choices of technology, organisational forms embracing patterns of ownership and control, education, culture, security, individual rights and social responsibility. In the circumstances the evolution of a philosophy if not a policy for communications is desirable and perhaps increasingly inevitable. The astonishing growth of technology, with all its promise of low cost and versatility

and dangers of manipulation and alienation, is itself reason to ensure that technology does not become a runaway monster but remains a benign, humanising influence

The advocacy of formal national communications policies is relatively recent. Few countries have moved in this direction though some like Finland, Canada (The Instant World), and Australia (Telecom 2000) have sought to project a communications future. Several other countries have from time to time reviewed specific areas of communications or the media through committees and commissions of inquiry which have recommended various indicative targets, priorities and structures. A national communications policy has therefore often been implicit even if not explicit as a guide to action. In the United States, the Federal Communications Commission is vested with various regulatory powers in relation to the electronic media and telecommunications systems and Congress has found it necessary to finance the Public Broadcasting System which has grown into a large, powerful and popular network that fills what was perceived as a major gap in the output of the commercial broadcast services.

An element of communications planning has been inherent in the very process of national planning in India, especially for telecommunications and to a lesser extent for broadcasting. The Press Commission, the Working-Group on Autonomy for Akashvani and Doordarshan, the Education Commission, the Electronics Commission, the 10-Year Perspective Plan for Space, 1971-81, and the National Committee on Science & Technology's Panel on Futurology (2000 A D) have at various times and at various levels reviewed existing structures, forecast future needs and peered dimly into the future. What has been lacking is a wider systems approach, comprehending all aspects of communications and communications technology. The Planning Commission reportedly may set up a group to undertake such a study. Whether or not what emerges is embodied in a formal policy statement is not so much to the point as the availability of an informed overview that sets



out the problem in perspective and spells out various possibilities and options

**C**ommunications and technology are not neutral. The medium as much as the message has social and cultural implications. Questions such as who has access to it, who controls it, what it costs, and who are the gatekeepers have bearing on the nature and content of the message. Advertising, for instance, is by no means value free. Nor are the cinema or books, newspapers and broadcasting. These matters can be left to be determined by the market or, at the other end of the scale, may be closely regulated by the State. Many intermediate positions can also be conceived of between complete *laissez faire* and total State control.

India has opted for a mixed economy with a measure of planning in a liberal, pluralistic society. The Constitution contains a number of Directive Principles of State Policy which bear on communications policy within the framework of a welfare State — an egalitarian and just society organised on a somewhat decentralised basis with 'self-governing' village units at the base. While this may suggest the constitutional ideal, the reality is different, a loosely centralised society which is still far from egalitarian and exhibits a bias in favour of the urban elite. Some 45 per cent of the population lives on or below the bread line. 78 per cent is rural and 65 per cent illiterate. Rural society in particular is highly stratified, and there are striking regional disparities.

It is in this context that the role and growth of communications must be viewed. It can either serve existing interests, thus preserving the status quo and the social and political balance of forces that that implies, or it may be envisaged as an instrument, among others, for promoting a social and economic transformation. It is not enough to develop communications systems as part of the general infrastructure. The question is, infrastructure for what and for whom? The answers to such questions can help determine the kind of communications that should be developed in terms of technology and hardware and the uses to which it

should be put by generating the appropriate software.

It is instructive to look at the present state of communications in India. At the base we have to contend with the fact of widespread illiteracy (with an even lower level of rural and female literacy) and a great multiplicity of languages and scripts which tends to constrict national intercommunication.

The postal and telegraph services are still limited, and while all the country's 576,000 villages enjoy the facility of a daily postal delivery, daily clearances will only become universal by 1988 when each village may expect to have a letter box. The present diffusion of telegraph and telephone service is still more limited, though higher priority is now being given to the development of rural telecommunications.

**T**he telephone system has greatly expanded though it remains way behind demand. Subscriber trunk dialling systems are available between major centres and limited data transmission facilities have been introduced. Overseas communication services operate via satellite and a troposcatter link between Delhi and Moscow. The domestic system is likely to undergo major change with the launching of an Indian satellite, INSAT-I, in 1981 with telecommunications, meteorological and television capability. Computer and electronic data processing usage is rapidly increasing with local manufacture of much of the equipment. The recently established National Remote Sensing Agency will increasingly generate and process a vast amount of data pertaining to various natural resources, seasonal measurements of various phenomena, and ecological changes. A National Informatics Centre supported by four regional cells is being set up and will soon be operational with 15 mini-computer terminals located in different parts of the country feeding into a giant host computer in Delhi. A National Information System for Science & Technology is also planned. Together, NRSA, NIC and NISSAT will greatly enhance national capability in planning and social and economic decision-making.

So far as the mass media are concerned, newspapers boast a long

tradition in India. Yet, the total circulation of the 929 daily newspapers in the country is under 10 million. Readership is undoubtedly greater with newspapers being read out to groups of people or changing hands. But even using a multiplier of five, the total net newspaper readership would not account for more than 30 to 40 per cent of the literate adult population. The readership of some 13,500 periodicals and journals with a 27 million circulation would improve this percentage, but only modestly.

**A**s in most developing countries, radio listenership is wider. Especially after the transistor revolution, there is scarcely a village in the country that does not have a little single-band battery operated set even if it be privately owned. There are today something approaching 20 million licensed radio sets including a couple of 100,000 community listening sets among which would be about 50,000 school sets and a like number with organised group listening around them in 'charcha mandals'. Radio came to India in the early 1920s and as of today Akashvani or All-India Radio broadcasting from 84 stations, has a theoretical primary medium wave coverage of 90 per cent of the population though interference and attenuation reduce effective coverage.

Television was introduced much later and far more selectively. There are today only a little more than 670,000 sets though the population covered by the 16 originating and relay centres may be as much as 100 million.

The cinema is more ubiquitous. The Indian film industry is the world's largest and is served by some 10,000 cinema houses, including mobile and travelling theatres, with up to 4000 million admissions per annum. Plans are afoot to enable the Film Finance Corporation to assist in the construction of janata theatres in semi-urban areas and to encourage the production of children's films during the International Year of the Child through the aegis of the Children's Film Society.

The location, reach, content and perceptions of the press, radio and



television, and the cinema are predominantly urban. No hard figures are available, but it can safely be assumed that over 80 per cent of both newspaper subscribers and radio receiver licenses are urban based, and are predominantly located in the larger cities at that. This would again be true of cinema audiences. Within this skewed distribution there is a further element of distortion in so far as the media diffusion rate, whether for the press or radio, is far lower in north-eastern, eastern and north-central India than in the rest of the country. This regional imbalance is in turn both the consequence and cause of lop-sided social and economic development. The evidence *prima facie* suggests a certain correlation between literacy and per capita income levels on the one hand and media diffusion on the other.

The education system has expanded vastly since independence. About 100 million young persons are enrolled in educational institutions of which something over 90 million would be in school. However, only around 70 per cent of the children in the age group 6 to 14 is in school, the figure for girls and 'backward States' being lower. The dropout rate is high, especially in the lowest classes, for a variety of structural and social reasons which are not discussed here. The result is that illiteracy has been growing and that there are now approximately 100 million illiterates in the critical 15 to 35 age group. It is this group that the National Adult Education Programme launched in October 1978 aims to bring to functional literacy within a span of seven years in one of the boldest educational drives ever undertaken anywhere.

Functional literacy or adult education, Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educationist-in-exile, would say, does not imply teaching the poor and disadvantaged to read and write words, but to read and write reality, that is, to understand their own pitiable social condition and the reasons for it, as a basis for remedial action. In this sense, education is a political act with revolutionary implications for changing the status quo in favour of a more just society. The teacher, like the preacher, is one of the oldest of tradi-

tional communicators; and what is education if it is not communication.

Transfer of technology is fundamental to the whole development process and is again closely dependent on communications. In India some 50,000 national extension service workers supported by various subject matter specialists constitute the cutting edge of information-transfer in the field of agriculture which is the mainstay of the economy. There are smaller cadres of health extension workers, social educators, craft instructors, rural and urban animators and motivators. All these change agents are involved in delivering a series of development and social messages largely through inter-personal communications, group discussion, informal instruction and demonstrations. They also rely on the traditional media which are sometimes very effective in delivering contemporary messages through hallowed and well-loved symbols and characters, religious and secular, and can command a new reach through the mass communications media.

The Satellite Instructional Television Experiment, 1975-76, was a novel and useful experiment in seeking to enlarge horizons and bring new knowledge to groups of villagers in some of India's most backward regions through direct satellite reception community viewing programmes. On the estimate, some 60 per cent of all SITE viewers were first generation modern-media consumers. The experiment was a valuable learning experience and reinforced earlier conclusions regarding the need for careful pre-testing of programmes, an inter-disciplinary systems approach, back up through local discussion leaders, extension support, print material and feedback. The importance of a multi-media approach was well demonstrated.

The Central Government has its own information and publicity media: the Press Information Bureau, the Films Division, the Publications Division, the Field Publicity Unit, the Song and Drama Division, the Photo Division, the Research and Reference Division, and the Directorate of Audio-Visual Publicity which is the 'official advertising agency'. Certain ministries additionally have their own specialised media

units. The Health Ministry has mounted a family planning motivation drive, the Education Ministry has supported the establishment of educational technology centres for the preparation of audio-visual aids including radio and television instructional material, and the Agriculture Ministry has sought to develop instructional and extension kits. These three ministries have collaborated with Akashvani and Doordarshan in mounting instructional programmes on a limited scale.

Among the more promising broadcast experiments have been various teacher training and language teaching programmes; the Farmers Training and Functional Literacy Programme which has carried forward the idea of the earlier rural radio forum in better structured discussion groups or *charcha mandals* built around programmed learning through community listening; the Farm-School-of-the Air which has induced significant numbers of registered farmer-learners to follow a variety of serial lessons on location-specific crop cultures and farm practices, and radio-cum-correspondence courses organised by five universities. The school broadcasting programme extends to 50,000 schools, but is of uneven quality.

In all these cases the mere fact of instructional broadcasting with matching terminal facilities, even if properly maintained, is not enough. Techniques of broadcast instruction and programming, the development of appropriate interfaces with concerned departments and agencies, support services and matching inputs of various kinds, and the need for constant feedback and evaluation are absolutely essential. These have to be organised on a fail-safe basis if continuity and credibility are to be established and maintained.

The State governments have their own publicity apparatus and operate a number of mobile film vans which are a draw. But the paucity of material, the quality of the films screened, and the limited number of vans available to cover vast areas leaves a great deal to be desired.

The official film documentaries are often dull and ponderous, though



there have been notable exceptions. On the other hand, the bulk of the films produced by the motion picture industry, though tremendously popular, is mediocre and quite unreal if not pure fantasy. The Bombay and Madras box-office hits follow a formula and are probably completely escapist because the reality is so grim for most audiences that its portrayal would hardly provide entertainment. On the other hand, there are some excellent productions and a growing number of highly talented and thoughtful producers dedicated to serious, social themes. But they do not easily break into the exhibitors' circuit. This however is changing.

The world of books is growing but reaches only a small, educated, urban minority.

Advertising is more pervasive through the other media and directly through hoardings and billboards. The total advertising budget, public sector and private, possibly aggregates something of the order of Rs 150 crores — not a very large sum, but a considerable amount in relation to, say, Akashvani and Doordarshan's revenue budget which was just over Rs 50 crores in 1977-78. The advertisement revenue of Akashvani and Doordarshan is only about six per cent of the total national advertising budget. The print media gets a larger slice and is indeed heavily dependent on advertising for much of its revenues. The nature and content of advertising is largely urban-oriented. This has implications for the kind of media that attracts advertisements as the advertiser too is trying to reach a target audience to promote his wares or to earn goodwill. These messages can sometimes run counter to the main thrust of development by promoting consumerist aspirations or values that might not accord with larger social goals. There is a contradiction here which is not easily resolved in a free society.

However, the notion that advertising is per se bad, wasteful and unnecessary is unfounded. Advertising is an essential adjunct of marketing and sales promotion and is instrumental in sustaining competition, quality and innovativeness. Various services like insurance and banking

and desired social attitudes like the small family norm are also widely advertised. Advertising by multinationals constitutes only a small part of the country's total advertising budget and is not therefore a major problem as in certain other countries.

Libraries, museums, exhibitions, the theatre, posters, wall papers and mailed literature are important means of communication but as yet relatively modest in scale and scope. The Central Government-sponsored fortnightly wall paper, *Hamara Desh*, has a circulation of no more than 60,000 in 12 languages.

India has an ancient oral tradition and inter-personal communications by word of mouth remain paramount, with large numbers of people ever ready to attend political meetings and religious discourses, and daily gatherings around village chaupals, wells and tea stalls. Fairs and festivals are incomplete without traditional minstrels, bards, puppeteers, players and other performers. Traditional folk forms combining song, drama, dance and mime such as Burra Katha, Yakshagana, Bhavai, Jatra, Tamasha, Nautanki and the like retain their popularity and are versatile enough to have begun to acquire a new functional reach. The ubiquitous loudspeaker however has become a terrible noise pollutant. The town crier is a dying species, but village announcements are still often heralded by beat of drum. The street calls of itinerant vendors and tradesmen and work songs of farmers, carpet weavers and road gangs are also still heard.

What this brief recital reveals is the very broad range of communications in India — traditional and modern, big and small, simple and complex, commercial and non-commercial, each catering to a given strata or need. As in the case of industry, transport and energy where the spinning wheel, the bullock cart and cowdung cakes coexist with automated plants, jet aircraft and nuclear power, India will have to continue to rely on a varied communications mix for some time to come. It is also apparent that much of what passes for mass communi-

cations in India is essentially a means of class communications.

Where do we go from here? India's commitment to a democratic, open, just and more egalitarian society and its determination to ensure tolerable living standards for all its people within the next 20 years dictates certain obvious priorities for communications policy as much as for other basic sectors of development. By 2000 A D the country's population will have grown to 950 million. Hopefully, by then there will be near-universal literacy. However, some 65 to 70 per cent of the population will still continue to live in the villages though the quality of rural life will be different from what it is today with the grouping together of villages in more viable techno-economic clusters and the emergence of a large number of growth centres forming intermediate links in a closer rural-urban nexus than prevails today. The political and economic structure will be more decentralised and participative than at present.

Such a society will be more communicative. It will need more communications and will have more to communicate at all levels with a more assertive public opinion demanding to be kept better informed. There will be pressures for greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs and of economic and social institutions, a hunger for reading material among tens of millions of neoliterates, rising demands for technical and scientific information and data processing at the macro and micro levels, and a far bigger draft on communications for education and entertainment. Disparities have narrowed between rich and poor, town and country, region and region, and men and women. India will demographically remain an essentially young country.

India certainly needs mass communications, but it must have a strong foundation in communications for, by and of the masses and a communications system that reflects the enormous diversity of the country. The difference between the prevailing and desired communications system represents a 'communications gap' that must be filled, taking into account such technological options as



might become available. However, care and restraint will be necessary in order to prevent hardware-led software decisions resulting from ignorance, market pressures, blandishments, or a mistaken desire to keep up with the Joneses. It will also be necessary to seek simple, rugged, low cost, low energy, small-gauge options so as to ensure facility of management, maintenance and wide diffusion. Yet there is no cause to fear technology suitably controlled and guided, it can be a powerful development tool for narrowing disparities and enhancing the quality of life

**T**he perception of such a 'communications gap' related to national goals and priorities will suggest the broad outlines of a communications policy and a communications plan for meeting it in terms of investments, phasing, hardware, systems development and training. Any such policy and plan should be flexible and subject to periodic evaluation and review. Various departments of government, the media, industry, the universities and public opinion should be involved in this exercise and it would be useful to bring these elements together in a multi-disciplinary national communications council that could provide an overview and undertake or commission specialised studies and research.

What could or should be some of the elements of a communications policy for India? Quite obviously, the first priority must be the universalisation of education and functional adult literacy in the shortest possible time. The media can no longer be limited to catering to the educated. They are capable of being used as instruments of informal, continuing and part-time education and must be deliberately deployed to awaken, conscientize and mobilise the masses, for the transfer of technology, extension services, social, civic and political education, and the widest possible cultural expression. The formal structure of learning and extension cannot be bypassed. The teacher, extension worker, social animator and political cadre must continue to function but will be able to do more with communications support, the communications spectrum itself being part of a larger system

**L**anguage development merits equally high priority as language constitutes the basic means of articulation. India has 14 major or scheduled languages and a large number of other distinctive languages, more or less developed, either with or without a script. It is astonishing that a country so sensitive to language should have so neglected language development and failed to evolve a meaningful language policy. The prime failure has lain in equating language with the concept of an 'official language' which has in turn been equated with officialdom, ignoring the natural and vibrant language of the people as spoken in the bazaar. For all its sins, one has only to contrast the popular Hindi of the cinema with the stultified official Hindi of Akashvani to realise what an obstacle has been placed in the way of mass communication and comprehension.

According to a former Japanese Education Minister, Japan simplified its highly complex ideographic script by eliminating hundreds of characters at a time when it was important for the country to promote mass education as a base for economic development and scientific advance. Once this had been accomplished by the 1960s, it fell to him to reintroduce some of these discarded characters in the interests of cultural enrichment, both in terms of language and art. May be there is a lesson in this for India.

Little attention has been paid to improved language teaching, the development of teaching aids, script simplification and standardisation, and the development of standard or improved keyboards for the various scheduled languages. Little work has been done on typography. The availability of inter-language dictionaries, book translations as between Indian languages, dubbing and subtitling equipment and simultaneous interpretation facilities is minimal where it is not altogether absent. The cost of this neglect is not easily computed but must be high.

The problem is not confined to Hindi. An enterprising Telugu newspaper has commissioned Osmania University's Department of Linguistics

and the Andhra Pradesh Telugu Akademi to evolve a standard Telugu which would make it accessible and intelligible to all people in all the regions of the State. A seminar conducted by Osmania University in February 1978 on 'The modernisation of Indian languages in the news media' urged the need for a national commission of linguists and phoneticians. The Devanagiri script as presently written with *matras* or diacritical marks above and below the letters takes up approximately 30 per cent more space than the equivalent text written in the Roman script. There is a major question of economics and conservation of paper involved here.

The letters or type-faces of characters in the various Indian languages require redesigning for graphic display. The National Institute of Design at Ahmedabad and a few others are working on this problem. The Electronics Corporation of India, Hyderabad, in turn, is experimenting with the use of Devanagiri and Telugu for computer programming and generation on display screens with something called a dotmatrix printer capable of three-line printing that provides for upper and lower *matras*.

**T**hirdly, it is necessary constantly to remind ourselves that the illiterate man is not necessarily uneducated and certainly not uncultured. Religion, tradition and ingrained social mores are powerful socialising forces and the oral tradition of India — and indeed of several other 'traditional societies' — is a vital stream that has run parallel to the literary tradition. It embodies the wisdom of the ages and sages and an extraordinarily rich and diverse cultural heritage. This cultural identity is a precious asset and one on which communicators can draw with advantage, reinterpreting ancient and familiar symbols anew in transmitting contemporary messages. The traditional media must therefore continue to grow.

A fourth basic element of communications policy must be to use communications as a prime resource for development and national integration. The concept of development support communications has been



pooh-poohed by some critics as a plausible but sinister device by which States might take control of or impose restraints on the media. In their opinion, what the developing nations require is not development communications but communications development or a suitable communications infrastructure with some training thrown in. This is precisely to fall into the trap of mistaking the hardware for everything, essential though hardware development might be.

Since investible resources are limited and communications as a whole cannot claim a disproportionate share of the development budget, developing societies must determine what their priorities for communications are going to be, to what end, and on what calculation of costs and benefits. Going in for colour television or even for television without a clear idea of what purpose and what target audience it is intended to serve or whether there is sufficient funding or programming capability to fulfil the desired objective without having to fall back on large scale screening of canned imports that can alienate and de-culturise unsophisticated audiences, is an instance to point

However, if the media are to be used for development support communications, including education, they must fit into larger loops and systems with appropriate interfaces between the various agencies: Central and State governments, local administrations, universities, extension agencies, trade and industry, subject matter specialists, researchers, creative workers, evaluators and the rest. Who is to structure the interfaces and how is this best done? How should these truly joint ventures be funded and to whom should they be accountable? There may be no single answer, and different needs and circumstances will possibly dictate varying solutions

**A** fifth aspect of policy lies in recognition of the growing importance of a systems approach to communications development, organisation and multi-media usage, especially in the area of development support and educational communications. The radio instructor for example can only supplement, not supplant the classroom teacher or the extension worker

who should not be allowed to feel threatened or alienated. The two have to work together, radio learning being reinforced by print and experimental support and made reiterative or capable of interruption for classroom interjections, explanations or question and answer sessions by being transcribed or made available on tapes which the teacher can replay at will if equipped with a cassette tape recorder. Instructional communications or media education should be an integral part of training whether for teachers or extension workers so that they are thoroughly familiar with the media, understand their possibilities and limitations, know how to use them effectively, and can interact intelligently and constructively with media people

**T**here must be clarity of objectives if there is to be avoidance of the kind of situation where INSAT-I is scheduled to be commissioned by early 1981 without any firm decision having yet been taken about the utilisation of its television component. Such a decision will have to be matched with investments in the related ground-segment and appropriate programme preparation. The SITE experiment provides insight into the time and effort it takes to visualise, create, pre-test and deliver meaningful programmes. It is already late and unless some very early decisions are taken the INSAT-television investment of Rs. 30-40 crores may be infructuous or ineffectively utilised

The low cost aspect has been stated earlier. This criterion will apply as much to choices between communications systems as to choices within systems. Television would be a good example. India long debated whether to go in for television without first developing a more adequate sound broadcasting network. Though a pilot Delhi television centre was established in 1959, daily transmissions only commenced in 1965 and a second station was not opened until 1972, in Bombay, making the beginning of slow expansion. Thereafter, pressures for switching over to colour have been resisted on the ground that incremental capital costs apart, operating costs over black and white transmissions would go up by a factor of three and the cost of television receivers by a factor of two. Colour

is certainly more appealing and closer to reality than black and white. But it has yet to be established that the information gain from colour over black and white can be justified on an estimate of costs and benefits. However, Doordarshan has wisely adopted a colour compatible system so that there should be no difficulty in going over to colour at any later stage

**M**ore important than the colour issue is the kind of radio and television system India needs. If the objective is primarily education and information and a genuinely mass-rural orientation, then the programmes must relate to the peoples' environment and be location specific in terms of various agro-climatic and socio-cultural situations. This would suggest the need for more participative programming involving the people in their homes, fields and factories instead of contriving to re-enact life in the studio. This would in turn imply wider use of portable, low-gauge, low energy equipment like the half-inch videotape recorder. The technical quality might not be as good as that made with more 'professional' studio equipment, but this could be more than compensated by the gain in authenticity. In terms of cost, a limited budget would stretch very much further and discontinuities in programming could be mitigated. The Space Applications Centre, Ahmedabad, has done commendable work in this whole area

The development process places an increasing premium on improved telecommunications which is likely to witness rapid expansion and greater investment. Numerous technological choices will present themselves and decisions on these must be related to larger policy choices and systems planning. Computerisation and data transmission are not irrelevant to a developing society for selected uses and sectors. An experiment was conducted in 1976 to test the feasibility of India gaining access to data banks in Europe by temporarily linking the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Bombay with the European Space Research Organisation at Frascati near Rome, via satellite. There were no problems. Information not available at the data bank initially queried was immediately obtained



from other sources through automatic switching arrangements. With the Arvi (Pune) and Dehra Dun earth stations in operation, the Madras earth station under construction, and an east zone earth station to follow, it should soon be possible to establish a national data hook up via INSAT with international interconnections. The P & T Department is meanwhile separately working on teletext systems. India's first teleconference was conducted in March 1979 when a four-city seminar on Satellite Telecommunications Experiments was inaugurated from Delhi, with participants in Ahmedabad, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, using the Franco-German Symphonie satellite.

At other levels, the non-broadcast use of video is likely to grow with video-packs for rural-extension services and closed-circuit television for industrial use. The National Remote Sensing Agency is meanwhile constructing an earth station near Hyderabad to monitor US Landsat imagery and meteorological data. Once all these applications attain a certain scale, backed up with manufacturing capability and a pool of trained manpower, some spin-off into secondary sectors might be expected. It should be the object of any communications policy to watch out for and even anticipate such possibilities and plan to exploit them to advantage in an optimised communications mix.

**I**n the sphere of information, communications policy should be concerned with processing and making available more data for study and research by the academic community and others. This suggests the need for greater openness in government and industry and a greater degree of inter-sectoral intellectual exchange than would obtain in a more inhibited political and social system. A more decentralised society would in any case require the generation of social and economic data at many more levels than otherwise and a greater exchange between these levels for informed decision making, coordination and control.

In more specific media terms, the country is in the process of reviewing

its press and broadcasting systems. A Working Group on Akashvani and Doordarshan reported last year (1978) on structural changes making for a National Broadcast Trust operating not as an organ of government but as the collective voice of the Indian people. The Report spelt out the role of the broadcast media in terms of information, education and extension, and entertainment. It envisaged a continuing priority for radio over television over the next decade and the development of third-tier community broadcast facilities in the form of a widespread network of district or local radio and (more gradually) television stations at the base of a pyramid of national, regional and local programming with a greater degree of public participation than evident today.

**R**adio still has a very considerable unutilised potential and being relatively inexpensive can be used to saturate the country. The Working Group reckoned that there might be up to 180 million radio sets and 18 million television receivers by the turn of the century. Community listening and viewing are by no means things of the past. Despite the transistor, access to radio is still limited in certain regions and among certain sections of the population. Group listening and viewing can even otherwise be a potent factor in conscientisation, social mobilisation, education and extension through discussion among peers which also heightens information gain and retention. As in SITE, it would be desirable to densify radio listening in given districts with low radio diffusion rates and thereby create an information market to which the local radio station might appropriately cater.

Such a planned promotion of instructional 'radio-activity' could be rewarding. Radio and television also have tremendous possibilities for distance learning through informal and continuing education. Akashvani's farm-schools-on-the-air have proved very successful and should be further developed. There is need for R & D in developing appropriate media and communications systems in different regions in accordance with needs, possibilities and stages of development. The development of low gauge

technologies and related facilities, band width reduction for slow-scan television, radio vision, the conjunctive use of radio and television, mobile and aerial transmitters lofted on balloons, tape and videotape libraries, projector-slide serials, simple power packs and maintenance kits are all clearly indicated.

**T**he Indian press has a long established political tradition. It is interesting to recall that the first stirrings of nationalist revival after the repression that followed the 1857 uprising were manifested in the growth of a nationalist press which was sought to be controlled by the Vernacular Press Act of 1874. The agitation against this piece of legislation was among the precursors to the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885. Unfortunately the Indian press has not abandoned its early addiction to politics and editorialising. Development is a process and not necessarily an event and calls for a different set of news values.

Like the broadcast media, the print media is largely urban and elitist — 250 farm journals notwithstanding — and not nearly as professional as it should be. Training is lacking. Newspaper and news agency offices have not been able to develop worthwhile training programmes while the growing number of schools of journalism and departments of communications are yet to find their feet and establish standards that compel respect.

Kerala and a few other pockets excepted, the press has not significantly penetrated the rural areas. Here, again, a major task of communications policy should be to analyse the reasons why, and to encourage the growth of community papers at the level of the district and below. Something in the nature of an autonomous national press trust made up of men and women of independence and integrity could set up printing facilities in selected areas and make these available to potential entrepreneurs or journalist groups to enable them to start community papers, journals or even wall newspapers, without having to conform to any particular ideology. The trust could be funded through a modest newsprint or other cess on newspaper — an extension of the basis on which the new Press



Council is being supported. It could also be required to approve the domination of or name a certain number of 'public interest directors' to newspaper boards. This could be one means of broadbasing control over large newspaper group and news agencies through readers' representation in the top management.

It should also be possible to find ways and means of financing and circulating wall newspapers, mobile libraries, slides and cassettes, and even local papers and periodicals. One means of distribution might be to organise this in certain areas through the milk collection vans that ply the countryside every day, twice a day at dawn and dusk to carry milk from the villages to the dairies being established under Operation Flood. Small newspapers and journals could also be enabled to club together to share certain common facilities and to pool their circulation for purposes of advertising through a special agency.

If the media are to grow it will be necessary to plan for the design, development and manufacture or import of the requisite equipment and other raw material required such as paper and newsprint, printing presses, raw film, cameras, projectors, videotape recorders, typewriters and so on. Simple photo presses and facsimile transmission would get over the typographical handicap faced by certain Indian languages. There are over 60,000 printing presses in India ranging from large numbers of little treadle machines to high-speed rotaries. Photo offset printing is in wide use but electronic printing has just about made its debut. The growth of mass-circulation newspapers and periodicals and book publishing and the vast requirement of educational and technical literature indicates the need for far better and greater printing capacity. At the other end of the scale, a simple, rugged rural/small town press is needed. Like-wise, copiers and duplicators.

It would be worth exploring the possibility of establishing simple communications centres in the countryside. These might house printing, film processing and projection facilities, recording and other electronic equipment, cassettes, tape, picture,

transparency and print libraries, and a pool of technical and media personnel who might be in a position to assist community communications, for literacy and extension, develop local communications systems, produce community journals or wall papers and broadcast material, harness the traditional media, train personnel, build up reference material and local exhibits and generally provide a forum for cultural expression and exchange.

Communications and culture are closely interrelated and could be mutually reinforcing if accorded hospitality under a single roof. In view of the commitment to national adult literacy, community health, local broadcasting and integrated rural development, the communications input related to these programmes could well be coordinated through district communications centres. Interestingly, the Directorate of Field Publicity is experimenting with a multi-media information package in Ferozepur-Jhirka, a backward tehsil in Haryana. The integrated or package approach to agriculture and health would seem to be no less applicable to communications and information.

The telephone will become increasingly important for speedy, decentralised rural communications, development and administration. The critical veterinary delivery system of the highly successful Amul milk cooperative in Kaira district in Gujarat rests on a telephone network that enables a farmer member to call up and get veterinary assistance at his home for an ailing buffalo or cow within a few hours in any one of 830 and odd villages. In the same manner it should not be difficult to link rural telephones to nodal information centres which could provide a variety of services and respond to public queries. The divisible quality of new generation electronic systems will make it possible to establish small, cheap and highly reliable electronic exchanges for rural communications.

Community journals should enjoy preferential tariffs, newsprint supplies and other facilities within certain limits in order to encourage their establishment and growth.

The national news agencies too must be enabled to grow and cater to clients in all the major national languages and the small, up-coming community and local papers. At the present time, the four national news agencies do not between them reach more than a quarter of the daily press. Rather than duplicate weak services, they could specialise in certain selected areas so that they are together able to offer a better package. Wireless transmission over a special channel would enable them to serve rural and small town papers without teleprinter facilities. They could also combine to operate what could in time develop into a comprehensive international service with a degree of excellence in Asian and Indian Ocean coverage.

Akashvani's external services also require considerable augmentation, improvement and specialisation on transmitters powerful enough to reach the intended audiences.

The media are concerned with issues of freedom and access to information. The Indian Constitution lists freedom of speech and expression as a fundamental right subject to reasonable restrictions in the interests of security, public order, morality and friendly relations with foreign States. The courts have interpreted freedom of speech and expression to include freedom of the press. Press freedom is, however, not a proprietorial or property right that goes with ownership of a printing press. The right of the publisher or printer is no more than that of an individual who desires to exercise his right to freedom of speech and expression. But while a publisher or printer has a constitutional right to express his opinion, this does not override the reader's right to know and to be objectively informed of all news of public interest. It is the professional journalist who has over the years become the custodian of the citizens' right to information and it is this that entitles the journalist to access to information and to protection in the legitimate discharge of his duties.

Access to information is limited by various laws and regulations such as libel, provisions against incitement to violence including communal vio-



lence, the Official Secrets Act, contempt of court, and parliamentary privilege. All these need review. Attention should also be given to the issue of individual privacy which is assuming growing importance.

The Central and State governments regulate the accreditation of correspondents and distribute various perks. These practices too require a hard look. Among developing countries India has a good record in permitting foreign correspondents to function freely, and with regard to the import of books and films. But the government has on occasion been unduly sensitive and has sometimes imposed restrictions that might have seemed to serve some limited and immediate purpose, but may not have been consistent with the larger, long term good.

Communications policy, while taking note of technological research development, would be incomplete without communications research. This again is something of a void in India. A rapidly developing and changing society moving from tradition to modernity is going to experience a variety of social and economic tensions which a sensitive communications system could help mediate.

Public opinion polls are a post-war phenomenon, but charismatic leaders like Gandhi and Nehru and their counterparts elsewhere have always had the gift of sensing the national mood. Charisma is, in part, communications.

Like other developing societies, India seeks the establishment of a New International Economic Order which will narrow the gap between rich and poor, North and South, the haves and have nots. Among the assets that industrially advanced societies possess and which the developing nations lack is advanced technology, a developed infrastructure, and economic power — all of which place them in a superior position in encounters with the Third World. Developing nations all too often find themselves at a considerable disadvantage in communicating among themselves and with the advanced industrial nations. Hence the demand for a corresponding New International Infor-

mation and Communications Order which is structurally linked with the emergence of a New International Economic Order.

The demand for these new World Orders is a legitimate cry for equality which will gain credibility if the striving for global equality is matched by real movement towards equality within national boundaries. The foundations of the New International Economic Order and the New International Information Order will be well and truly laid if they are simultaneously laid at home — within developing societies. There has to be freedom and balance in the flow of news and in communications structures at home as much as abroad. To segregate these two aspects would be mistaken even if it were possible.

The importance of communications is steadily increasing with the explosion of knowledge and information in an inter-dependent world. The growing facility of moving information instead of moving people or goods will probably profoundly influence future life styles. Instant communications could encourage decentralisation of functions which have hitherto compelled aggregation or concentration.

The world needs communications for diplomacy and defence. Over the past 30 years, the hot line is what has ultimately stood between human survival and a nuclear holocaust — a frightening thought. The world clearly needs more and better communications for peace and understanding, for the 'equality' and 'fraternity' that invests 'liberty' with greater meaning.

Development communications has a prime role to play in the fulfilment of this larger task, for the foundations of equity, human dignity and enriched living must be laid at home — within each developing society. Communications can be a liberating and humanising force if wisely used through participatory structures on the principle of sarvodaya or the welfare of all. Many paths might conceivably lead to this desired objective. Whichever the route chosen, it will need a philosophy of communications to get there.



# The global problem

ROMESH THAPAR

THE argumentation on our global future can become absurdly unrealistic unless we focus with courage and clarity on the critical question which everyone evades, namely, how we are to discipline the wasteful consumption and living standards now enshrined in the value systems of those who have been historically fortunate in building their affluence in a world which is largely exploited, poor and defenceless. This affluence — dehumanized, vulgar, and uncivilized — is sought to be projected as the underpinning of social security and well-being, a model for all humanity to emulate. It can no longer be accepted as such because the burden of populations inhabiting our planet makes it impossible to texture living standards in the manner of the affluent. Profound changes will have to take place if a special quality of life is to be evolved and made available to millions around the world, particularly those who inhabit the crowded southern hemisphere. No amount of sophisticated 'model-making' is going to get around the critical shortages which are the lot of a majority of humanity.

It has become fashionable to speak of the lack of productivity and enterprise in developing societies, as if those societies are their own grave-diggers, or to urge regionalized panaceas around the slogans of appropriate technology, recycling, 'small is beautiful,' and the joys of simple living. We, in the southern hemisphere, need to improve productivity and enterprise and to use any creative idea which helps meet human needs and satisfactions. But the fond notion that there can be, for ever, and

ever, three or four or five levels of material living in our transformed planet is about as absurd as the old belief of the feudal lord that his serfs could never aspire to his status. And here a word about our societies, mistakenly called developing societies or lumped into 'the Third World,' where something traumatic is happening at the base. Colonialism spread a basic feeling of inferiority amongst people who had for long worked out relevant patterns of living. Face to face with industrialization, they were made to feel hopelessly inadequate, their skills acquired over centuries were thrown aside in the great takeover of technology. That inferiority is being further compounded today by the exhortation of armies of intellectuals — economists, sociologists, and what have you — who are seeking to programme them on the basis of self-defeating models.

We seem to be forgetting that these communities are composed of people who already have an expertise and that before we can decide what is good for them, we have to take them into our confidence. People who, for example, have built their own homes for generations in local materials don't need to be told that that is the way to do it. What they need is a technological service which helps fortify the mud or the bricks or the tiles on their roof. And we should be aware that they have a great deal to teach the so-called advanced world as well, which today yearns to escape from its soulless concrete jungles. If we don't base ourselves on the reservoir of traditional skills and strengthen the confidence of people in themselves, what



else can they do except chase, or rather ape, what even the so-called advanced technological world has lost faith in. The coexistence of vastly differing levels of material living is daily degrading large communities in their estimation of themselves, making it impossible for them to participate in their growth in any meaningful way.

This is the quiet colonialism which is based on powerful vested interests buttressing an untenable value system, and capable of ferocious retaliation when challenged. In this context there are angers building which can profoundly impact economic and political policy and ultimately encircle and confront the waste-makers. Add to this the visible crises rooted in the economic anarchy of our time and the armament budgets of leading nations, and we have an extremely depressive scenario.

The extraordinary explosion of population, now doubling every thirty years, coupled with the transition in emphasis from quality to equality and all that it implies in economic, political and social terms, have shattered the infrastructures to which we have been accustomed. The prolonged non-functioning of institutions and organizations, the global talk of participatory forms within the old frameworks, the spreading bankruptcy of management models and the resort to 'dynamic' individuals, and the large-scale damage done to the work ethic, to discipline and to creativity point to a planetary paralysis stemming from our failure to take up the extraordinary problems inherent in building the egalitarian societies of the future. The populist rhetoric of the politicians and the deadly equations of the rigid ideologues of Right and Left seek to fill the vacuum. To accept this is to invite disaster.

**T**ake the most satiated communities first. Whether it is in satisfactory housing or easy transport or health facilities or educational opportunity or job satisfaction or the simple needs of personal security, the systems which underpin the surface affluence are unable to utilize the resources available to them to structure societies which generate a feeling of fulfilment, let alone equality

Social security, even in the areas where it exists, spawns serious problems of alienation. The truth lies beneath the surface affluence. There is a deep longing for life styles which would fortify social security and yet simplify the actual business of living and working, for the consumer society does, in fact, carry the seeds of many social aberrations, distortions and sicknesses. Careful analysis invariably shows that it is the obsession with consumerism or the waste inherent in modern affluence which arises out of the financial interests of commodity production, and not the saturation of needs that is the septic focus. But there are fortunes to be made in consumerism and waste-making, and hence the solid resistance to those who would attack this problem on a priority basis.

**T**he practice of affluence is presented as the highest of human aspirations. Small wonder, then, that even in the less developed world the pockets of wasteful living are on the increase and are creating antagonisms among the poverty stricken which will be impossible to paper over. Every independent effort to create a different life style for those populations which did not have the opportunity to lead the industrial, scientific and technological revolutions has been sidetracked or derailed by the persistent propaganda and pressures of the affluent. We do not have to go far to realize that tourism, fashions, advertising, and myth-making on an international scale have so far broken the movements for integrated and civilized living. And, yet, we all know that ultimately it is at this level that our divided and traumatized world will meet, for the solutions have to be the same for all.

It may be that the passionate, single-minded advocacy of the integrated and civilized life for the overwhelming majority of humanity living in the developing world will create significant mutations in developed societies. It may be that we are on the edge of realizing that the new values cannot be isolated or compartmentalized, that the western advocates of these new values for the developing world may be persuaded to focus on their own socie-

ties. May be. All the more reason, therefore, that we begin to work out the details of the disentanglement from the concepts which have blunted our initiatives to find new solutions to problems in the northern and southern hemispheres, the so-called first, second, third, fourth and fifth worlds.

If we have learned anything from the many interlocked global crises which have overtaken us, it is this: that the natural creativity and productivity of human beings will have to be restored to them and that there will have to be a massive effort to bring science and technology under intelligent control and direction. The growth of a network of national and multinational manufacturing and trading giants and extensive and elaborate systems of consumption and disposal, together with all the national/regional tensions and eruptions inherent in such development, have polarized and destabilized the societies they were intended to serve, and particularly so in the southern hemisphere. Clearly, the task of correction cannot even begin in such a situation unless we demarcate two distinct areas of creativity and productivity: the informal, self-reliant, traditional sphere of human living and the formal infrastructure originally established to assist and enrich a more meaningful life but now dominating and dictating a pattern of regimented existence. The demarcation is fundamental to a correction, or else nothing can halt our slide into a foreseeable future of robot-like authoritarian rule and discipline to curb explosive angers and frustrations.

**S**ocieties being in different stages of development, the mechanics of demarcation will vary, but the common effort will have to be to make ourselves more and more self-reliant and less and less dependent on gigantic supporting infrastructures. Naturally, such an effort would demand that we purge our living standards and 'styles' of all the unnecessary trappings which represent a waste of time and energy. Only by a process of simplifying the business of living and designing this simplicity to reduce the tedium, competitiveness, harassment, and exhaustion inherent in the struggle for more and





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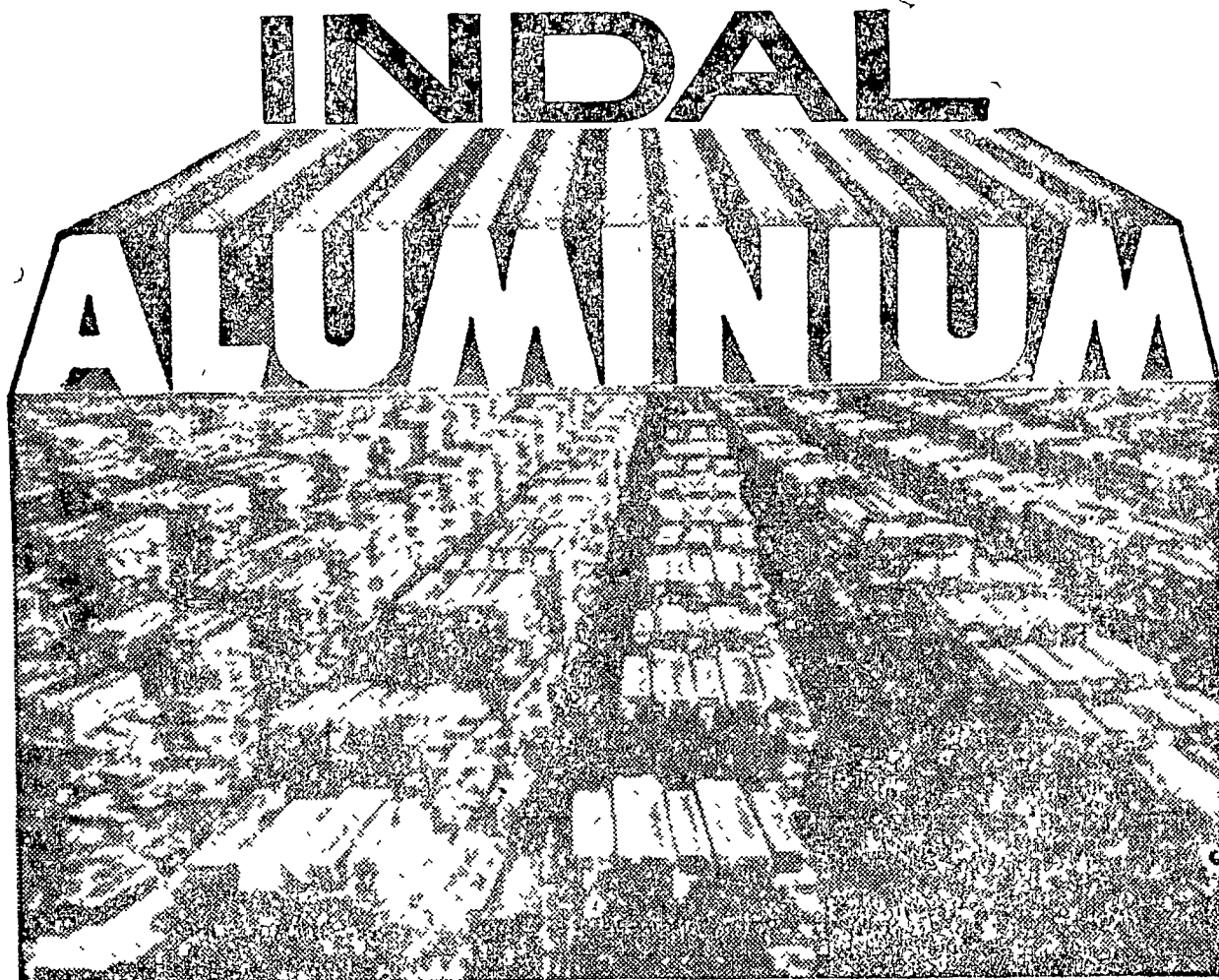
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more consumption, more and more of what one does not really need, can we sketch a framework for the future. This is the core of the challenge which envelopes human society, developed or developing. Over the years, as the interlocked revolutions of industry, science and technology opened fantastic vistas of growth, we failed miserably to elaborate this texture of humane living and to strike down the aberrations which enslave us. We have failed to control the revolutions we unleashed.

This failure to rethink our situation was due largely to our incapacity to see the transitions our world was making from an elitist age based on inequalities to one which proclaimed the equal rights of the poorest of the poor. The infrastructures of the past, valid in their time, continued into the present, unable to cope with the new challenges. Organizational sickness turned into paralysis, and soon decay had set in. We continued to believe in patchwork remedies, in brilliant flashes of initiative, in holding operations. No new structures or values were sought. Now the final chapter is being written. We still hanker after the old meaningless panaceas. The developing world imitates the developed, a global imitation which is a disaster scenario. And those who say so are dismissed as cranks, screw balls, nuts. But the battle, if it can be so described, is not lost. The very nature of the crises enveloping us could crack the status quo and unleash pent up creativities.

**T**he curbing of waste — and it must begin in the so-called advanced or developed areas of the world which set the patterns — is the central challenge and cannot be met by invocation. Specific alternatives have to be evolved and demonstrated, even as more complete systems capable of sustaining the bursting populations of this planet are sketched. I do not put half my earnings in renting accommodation in high rise slums when I can see my way to living in a comfortable home made of processed mud. I do not wish to possess a car if public transport is cheap, clean and effective. I have no desire to chase stereo-typed learning if I am able to acquire numerous skills, to use them productively, and

to renew them from time to time. I do not seek a job on the assembly line of a factory when I can employ myself. I do not want to be 'programmed' when I am able to plan a wholesome, varied and interesting life. Any other attitude of mind is in fact a surrender to the forces which are in the ascendant today and which only succeed in multiplying our traumas. This is simply stated only to emphasize the enormous effort that will have to be put in to achieve a rethinking about our human conditions.

**A**dmittedly, there is an undercurrent of rebellion in so much of what we write and discuss, but there is an embarrassment about defying the established norms and rituals. We are, in fact, waiting for catalysts of various strength to demonstrate clearly the possibility of qualitative changes. And the purpose of gatherings such as these must be to discover the elements of these catalysts and to put them together with a sensitivity born in the passion to achieve those qualitative changes which would purge our societies of waste and want. Unless we are able to sharpen this kind of intervention in our life and living, we will not be contributing to human advance. Individual demonstration and example cannot throw back the monsters we have spawned. Only alternative systems which work can mobilize the people.

Such systems will have to base themselves on the principle of maxima, the point beyond which all consumption is waste. The principle of maxima will have to link private or locally organized consumption with what is made available for the collective, for example a transport system. It will not take long to realize how much of the maxima is made up of self-reliant, decentralized productivity and to what extent this productivity is to be assisted or supplemented by the mechanisms of science and technology. The principle of maxima disciplines uncontrolled growth, wasteful consumption, and social aberration and underlines the need always to extend self-reliance to the utmost. An honest maxima takes a global view, for there cannot be several levels of material living. It carries within itself the

global limits to individual consumerism, but liberates and encourages growth in the most enlightened sense of the term. It is this organic interlocking that will ultimately catalyse the future.

It is only natural that those who have through historical circumstance organized themselves under a vast umbrella of science and technology and their unthinking imitators all over the world will oppose such a correction on the plea that it is an attempt to return to primitivism, that it negates the achievements of the last century and that it will destroy the creativity of our planet. This is the sort of obfuscation which has to be dealt with patiently. After all, the principle of the maxima, made up to self-reliant and collective productivity, places no restriction on the use of science and technology to make this world a very much better place to live in. But living is not to be based on false standards, which, if sought by the impoverished majority of the world's peoples, would lead to global paralyses, suffocation and suicide. Indeed, at micro level such symptoms are already visible within national systems despite the efforts to cover them. We have to learn that the principle of maxima maximizes the real growth of our planet.

**I**n other words, the time has come to state categorically that the anarchy of uncontrolled consumption, the glorification of what is called affluence, the propagation of five-star culture, and the cultivation of values which feed these fevers are a crime against human development and enlightenment. A spreading consensus on these crucial matters has to be sought, and it can only be speeded by tackling the problems of living in a way that makes sense to most categories of people. A great deal of this work is already under way at various levels. It needs coordination, integration and propagation.

This is the new renaissance that our traumatized world is already entered upon. As persons concerned not only with the broad outlines of a more hopeful and healthier future but also with the social engineering demanded of such a vision, we must trigger this renaissance in whatever way we can.



# Books

**LEADERSHIP AND LOCAL POLITICS** by S.N. Jha  
Jha Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1979.

**RURAL LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF INDIA'S MODERNIZATION** by Paramatma Saran  
Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 1978

THE books under review are studies of Indian politics and leadership at the local level in the States of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar — Meerut and Patna districts respectively. They are authored by social scientists — the former by a political scientist influenced by the sociological method and the latter by a sociologist. The meeting ground of the studies lies in the use of the 'district' as the unit of analysis.

Saran and his team have chosen to analyse district level politics as a means for understanding how changes in the wider modernizing Indian society have led to corresponding changes in the values and attitudes of the leadership at the local level. It is a thorough study based on data collected from sixteen villages of Patna district (see P. 19).

Jha's study, on the other hand, places undue emphasis on the district being the unit of analysis. He, also, wrongly claims to be the first one to do it. Administratively, the district is an important unit, nobody can deny. In fact, for Indian economic historians, or those interested in studying land settlement patterns, land reforms and other aspects of agrarian economy, it is the most important unit for analysis. As a unit for political analysis, it may be important; but Jha has not been able to demonstrate how. According to him, a study of the district which is located mid-way between the micro and macro levels, helps to avoid the pitfalls of over-generalisation on the one hand and arguing that every situation is unique on the other.

He further goes on to say that the district, over the years, besides being an administrative unit, has also gained political importance with the district administration becoming the organising agency for governmental programmes. It is at this level, according to Jha, that non-officials get involved as advisors to the District Collector in the implementation of local programmes. While recognizing the importance of non-officials in the interplay of local focus of power and emergence of a district political style, he defines leaders as those occupying formal positions. Not only do his concepts ill-fit the data, but wherever there is good data, it is left hanging in mid-air without being connected to other bits and pieces and without general conclusions being drawn. In short, an otherwise promising study fails to take off. Despite this, the book is interspersed with interesting insights into Meerut politics.

Saran takes a broader view of leaders and leadership and includes entrepreneurs and intellectuals. May be he is forced to take a broader view, as he is concerned with the process of modernization. Saran supplements his 'positional approach' to the study of community power (namely, that an actor's power is closely associated with his position in an official or semi-official hierarchy) with the 'reputational approach' (community members knowledgeable about community life judge who constitutes the power structure according to certain criteria).

He cites an excellent example to demonstrate the advantage of the above. I quote, 'One of our investigators went to interview an elected member of the panchayat. While this member of the panchayat offered himself to be interviewed, he said, "You know, it is true I am a leader in this village, I have been elected to the panchayat, but you must also interview Mr Singh — he is a very powerful man in the village and without his help I would not have been elected." When the investigator went to Mr. Singh, he offered himself to be interviewed but politely asked, "Have you interviewed Mr. Ram? You know he is very important — he has contacts, he can deal with people well, he was instrumental in getting fertilizer from the block office during the last season". Thus, we find that networks of leadership cut across political institutions and different levels of political activity. Though similar observations are made by Jha, there is no systematic application of the concept of networks to his data.

Jha's study is divided into two parts. The first deals with the historical development of the struggle for dominance under different systems of representation in the District Board and zila parishad between 1923-1973. Likewise, the historical development of the Municipal Board is traced through its changing chairmen during the period 1876-1970. This part of the book is well-conceived and makes interesting reading. The second part deals with contemporary Panchayati Raj leadership. The data is based on interviews with leaders of the zila parishad, kshetra samiti and village panchayat. This is in the context of socio-economic background and value profile, political background-motivations and aspirations, and representatives role perceptions. This part lacks theoretical coherence and depth in description.

However, Jha's study reveals certain general conclusions. Firstly, that the relationship between the representatives and the represented is marked by openness and is subject to negotiation and bargaining. Secondly, in the implementation of developmental programmes, the representatives' background, values, attitudes and motivations determine institutional behaviour. Thirdly, that institutions at lower



levels (that is, village panchayat, zila parishad, etc) act as training ground for recruitment to higher positions. And lastly, the political style of lower-level institutions, which is characterized by caste, patronage and factionalism, conditions the political style at higher levels.

Jha's study bears out the observations of certain other authors on the subject that the immediate benefits of developmental programmes in the past twenty five years (upto 1973) have remained confined to the upper middle and richer sections of the population. The control of these classes over local government institutions not only help in widening the economic and political basis of the benefitted classes but also provide them with an effective say in other institutions as they control the distribution of patronage in their respective institutions.

The importance of Saran's work, which is based on his doctoral dissertation, lies in that he takes a fresh objective look at the age-old dichotomy between tradition and modernity. Through a very careful attitudinal analysis he demonstrates that conceptually and methodologically, this dichotomy is not valid. His book then can be considered a critique of the existing modernization theory.

Hence, instead of categorising leaders as 'traditional' or 'modern' (an approach he rejects after careful quantitative analysis) he divides his sample into 'pro-change' leaders and others. The pro-change attitudes of leaders have been analysed on four scales — (i) land legislation scale, (ii) media exposure scale, (iii) political scale and (iv) panchayat index. Further, the scale preferences are correlated with contextual factors such as the size, location, media exposure, and existence of factions in the villages from which the respondents came.

The book clearly gives the impression, contrary to popular belief, that Bihar leaders rate fairly high on the modernization scale. For instance, seventy-two per cent favoured a ceiling on land, seventy per cent favoured cooperatives, sixty one per cent would like to give advice to planners on agricultural matters, thirty five per cent were satisfied with the functioning of bureaucracy, sixty per cent felt that India's way of life should be determined by the village people. The book provides useful insights for drawing general conclusions for political sociologists, both in theory and data.

Finally, even though both the books under review are broadly studies of leadership and politics, they contain totally disparate bibliographies (except for two or three items). This shows that researchers on similar subjects have not learnt to have a dialogue and to pool their knowledge. This leads to the sad conclusion that the use of disparate analytical categories for similar kind of data makes it difficult for the macro-level analyst to conduct comparative analysis. Thus, the end to which social research is directed, namely, social policy, is rendered a non-viable proposition. Inevitably, the planners and policy-makers

are unable to draw insights from this kind of in-depth research and increasingly fall back upon hurriedly conducted mass surveys.

Aditi Desai

## **MEETING THE THIRD WORLD CHALLENGE**

by A I MacBean and V N Balasubramanyam.  
Macmillan Press Ltd, 1978.

IT'S the bogey of the decade and just about everybody is talking about it now. What is underdevelopment, how realistic are its standard measures, why have some efforts gone awry and which patterns of development should be avoided — these are all questions that have been part of development theory for a long while now and the ones to which the authors devote their attention, to

Any book on development, that's priced at nearly £4 and runs into a 2nd edition in two years, is in some senses a best-seller. Notwithstanding its deceptively simple title, the book is not really a handbook for the concerned layman. Though the authors attempt to maintain an admirable clarity of prose and simplicity of exposition, their obviously cloistered background peeks through ever so often, as when they talk with deceptive ease of 'first-best solutions' and the 'Hobson-Lenin thesis'.

The fault with most books on current issues is that they rush in quickly where the wary hesitate to tread and utilize the conclusions of the nascent thinking extant on the subject and portray the whole new world in clear unclouded blacks and whites. The problem with this lack of grey is that those who wish to understand these live problems are confused and the impressionable end up supporting untenable, lopsided views. But, of course, trying to preserve the dignity of balance makes most such works unwieldy and though the authors of this book set out in an earnest venture to be exhaustive, they succeed fairly well in avoiding this problem. Utilising the advantage that joint ventures have in such works the authors have competently surveyed most of the literature available in this field. Since the extent of material on development is vast, this feature of careful coverage is impressive. The authors intersperse their views on the subject with excellent summaries of theoretical research on the subject and empirical investigations — 'the Streeter dilemma,' 'the Prebisch thesis,' and 'Flanders rebuttal', RBI studies and OECD figures are all part of the survey.

Speaking from the viewpoint of the developed countries, the authors voice the normal plea for certain efficiency criteria. What is laudable is the fact that they note that economics is after all only part of the challenge of development and that very often political overtones cloud 'rational judgement' on issues like commodity trade and foreign private investment. Just as the white man toiled at 'the white man's burden', the developing countries now rally to the call of 'end this exploitation of our people'. No one really believed the earlier credo except its champions who forged ahead with evangelistic zeal,



bound within those blinkers. Yet, acknowledging that concept did help to gain a better understanding of the issues at hand. The burden of the authors' argument is that since economics is very often merely a convenient camouflage for dogma, the dogma itself must not be scoffed at.

The long association the authors have had with developing countries and agencies and the fact that development economists have used India as a sounding board for most theoretical issues on the subject, makes the book specially relevant to the Indian reader. Indian examples figure fairly prominently in the text and illustrations from the subcontinent abound. This probably explains the sympathetic handling of the intellectual xenophobia exhibited by economists and leaders of developing countries. This point is, however, laboured a shade too often and begins, one feels, to become patronising — a weakness that has been the bane of most other attempts to portray this feature.

The authors slip up fairly frequently in their attempts at chatty descriptions of 'negative value added' or 'effective rates of protection' — concepts that on their own, merit longer tomes and which are precisely the 'lingua franca' of jargon loving economists, out to befuddle any intelligent inspector. But since only the initiated can really grasp the nuances of these terms, they presumably are aware of the limitations of such simplistic arguments.

Some abbreviations appearing ad nauseum detract from the readability of the material. Numerous PFIs and sentences of the sort 'Under the rules of GATT; MFN duty free access is a right that cannot be arbitrarily withdrawn', are best avoided. Again, some really interesting illustrations are left hanging in the air — why for example is Swedish aid handled better, why was Malwai benefitted by British methods and (though in another view) what are the U-shaped houses upper-class Indians supposedly reside in?

It is rather sad though, that a book which does, purvey some unconventional wisdom and which maintains an admirable iconoclasm in some areas should end by toeing the same line as most works on this touchy subject of third world challenges. In seeking merely to analyse and not recommend, the authors seem to suggest — 'Let them do just what pleases them most'.

Dilip Cherian

**THE STRUCTURE OF AN INDIAN METROPOLIS. A Study of Bangalore** by V L S Prakasarao and V K Tewari. Allied Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi, 1979.

A GREAT deal of earlier research in urban planning in India was, inevitably, macroscopic cross-cultural investigations and analyses that highlighted the shared characteristics of cities. As such these resulted in a relatively high level of abstraction and generalization. These analyses have generally contained unstated

ideological premises derived initially from cross-cultural experiences, such as suburbanization and the concept of the downtown Central Business District, and later, as a reaction, to a tendency to reject urbanization as an ideal in favour of the development of moderate-size towns with handicraft industries and the preservation of many rural traditions, and the concept of 'over-urbanization' being an impediment to optimum economic development.

The book under review represents a welcome trend in obtaining and analysing indigenous data on Indian cities and the use of modern collating and modelling techniques in order to generate an objective and empirical framework for planning. As Norton Ginsberg mentions in his foreword to the book, 'the study is interdisciplinary, comprehensive, provides valuable baseline data, it applies to the Bangalore case a number of major theoretical propositions developed in urban studies elsewhere, and in so doing illumines insights into urban structure, kinetics and dynamics, it provides a framework and perspective to the city and regional planners. and it offers a methodology for replicating the study with regard to other cities in India and indeed elsewhere.'

The objective of the study was to provide an integrated analysis of the socio-economic and locational aspects of city-structure and city-region through the use of computers in the construction of urban land-use models and factorial ecological analysis. It was designed in the form of a sample survey of households, supplemented by analyses based on secondary data and field visits. The selection of households was correlated to spatially identified blocks of the city to provide the spatial socio-economic characteristics.

The book comprises the details obtained from the survey presented in the form of tables, charts and some computer modeled city plans, accompanied by short descriptive paragraphs. The data was obtained in the year 1974 from 639 variables for 1745 households (out of an estimated 114,000) from 89 variables for 10,568 persons (out of an estimated 1.80 millions) and from 228 variables for 901 ever-married women. The statistical information obtained is rich, varied and overwhelming.

The data obtained has been grouped under 9 headings, viz., demographic and social structure, economic structure, spatial structure, residential housing and living conditions, mobility, migration, movement to work, growth of the city and, finally, the emerging metropolis and region.

The authors come up with some interesting conclusions. Commenting on the density profiles of the city, they highlight the need to draw lessons from the cellular and hierarchic city structure which integrates elements of the garden city with the street pattern and local land-use structure, instead of following the pattern of a contiguous urban sprawl and the planning of parks and open spaces *per se*, currently in vogue.



They also did not find a simple 'rich centre and poor periphery' of the classical model, but a complex middle-class city centre and both high-status and low-status periphery, concentric zonation was not-existent in a geometric form but the dominance of the city core and distance from the city core were found to be significant in socio-economic zonal patterns which were also religion based. This is, course, not really surprising; as Gideon Sjoberg has pointed out (in Hausner and Schnore, *The Study of Urbanization*, John Wiley and Sons, 1965, Chapter 7) in many European cities, including those in the USSR, the persistence of the feudal tradition has inhibited suburbanization because high status was attached to residences in the Central City. Thus, in this process, the upper-middle socio-economic groups tend to reside beyond the city's core, leaving the central area to various low-status groups and elements of the elite as well. However, the continuing religio-centrality in the locational characteristics of Bangalore signifies that pre-industrial traditions are still strong even though the city's employment structure was dominated by secondary and tertiary sectors (Table II. 2.65, p. 148).

While most studies on the influences affecting the location and arrangement of land-use have been concentrating on economic or physical criteria, the present study attempts a less frequently considered socially rooted determinant of urban land-use. While undoubtedly the physical, economic and social influences are complexly interrelated so as to make differentiation and measurement of separate effects extremely difficult, it would appear an important variable in the Indian context in the determination of land-use patterns in cities.

However, from the plethora of data, the authors have not been able to present a coherent abstraction of the city of Bangalore that could be easily comprehended. One can recognize familiar subprocesses usually identified by urban ecologists, like (1) dominance, gradient and segregation, (2) centralization and decentralization, and (3) invasion and succession, but the book does not attempt deeper analysis that would have led to useful inferences. There is a need to understand *processes*, that is, in the ways in which change arises, occurs and in turn generates further response.

Thus, while the study explains 'what is', or, 'what has been', it is not directly oriented towards the operating needs of the city planner. What would have been the logical focus of the study is (1) the identification of mass and group values so that they may be taken into account in planning proposals, (2) the determination of behaviour patterns which are important to the social well-being and mental health of the urban resident, and (3) the translation of these values and behaviour patterns into physical criteria so that the design of the land-use plan can be made sensitive to these aspects of urban life.

Far it be for me to advise the authors on how the study should have been oriented or conducted, but

it is not easy to dismiss a book that is obviously the result of the kind of detailed study of a city's inhabitants that is essential for effective urban planning, but is seldom available in the Indian context, without, in some way, identifying its shortcomings and areas that need further research and consideration. Clearly, even greater efforts are required to be undertaken than the compilation of vast amounts of data if we are to understand why cities defy their Master Plans in their growth patterns. Accumulation of observations in large numbers and the mere multiplication of modelling experiments is comparatively fruitless without a search for integrations, for wider linking systems of order, a holistic approach. It is well known in systems analysis that optimising action taken at a particular time has repercussions which alter the context for decisions to act at subsequent times. The study on Bangalore is a long way from providing such insights.

Besides insensitivity to relevant issues and the inarticulate delineation of urban problems (the statement of the problem is half the battle as any researcher will aver), there appear to be large voids in the theoretical constructs of certain chapters. I found the two concluding chapters, 'The Emerging Metropolis and its Region', and, 'The Image of the City' (refer to the book of the same title by Kevin Lynch, The MIT Press, USA, 1960) weak and inadequate, and unaware of the work done elsewhere on the subject. Even passing familiarity with the works of J. Brian McLoughlin (*Urban and Regional Planning, A Systems Approach*, Faber and Faber, London, 1969) or Ian McHarg (*Design with Nature*, The Natural History Press, Doubleday, New York, 1969) will highlight gross deficiencies in the way the authors have dealt with the subject (as their study was conducted in 1974, I am only citing references that should easily have been available at that time).

Nevertheless, within the limits mentioned earlier, the book is of great value and makes a creditable contribution to the literature on urban planning in India.

A G Krishna Menon

**THE SISTERHOOD OF MAN The Impact of Women's Changing Roles on Social and Economic Life Around the World by Kathleen Newland. W W Norton and Co, New York. 1979**

KATHLEEN NEWLAND'S book, *The Sisterhood of Man*, presents a refreshing contrast to the mass of literature on women in recent years. By using the infinitely more demanding and tedious method of comparative analysis, she corrects the impression created by recent writing on women that the problems of expanding women's roles and improving women's status is confined to any particular socio-cultural system, religion or indeed to the wealth or poverty of the country concerned. In examining the issue of roles and status in certain limited contexts, without reference to specific cultures or religions or



economic structures, it is easier to focus on the universality of the secondary worth placed on women's status and the limitations imposed on the roles they are allowed to play. This is particularly apparent when we consider that there are only marginal differences between societies, due either to a strong women's pressure group or the structure of the economy, which account for an improvement in their overall status, rather than the fact that in any society women have or have had a salient position.

The book identifies several areas which affect the status of women. These include legal changes, education, health, media, politics, labour participation and wage structure and family. While she has emphasized the importance of legal changes as necessary for changing the status of women, Kathleen Newland points out that in many cases such changes tend to be cosmetic rather than real unless bolstered through women's education. The only way, she feels, by which political life and government could be transformed from male preserves is to institutions where women's voices could be equally heard. She points out the advantages of the Equal Rights Amendment sought to the American Constitution, according to which individuals would be judged on the basis of personal attributes rather than on their sex. However, the passage of ERA even when supported by strong women's groups and by government policy has created areas of resistance which are yet to be overcome.

In the important area of family structure and relationships, which are regarded by many sociologists to be the prime institution for the subjugation of women, Newland quotes from Fatima Mernissi (pp 19) who feels that 'the main objective of (Muslim) women should be to seek access to non-family networks. Their salvation lies outside the family'. While Mernissi was speaking about Muslim women in Morocco, Newland's own analysis is replete with examples from all over Asia to whom this dictum could easily apply. Since the pattern of family control while less important in the West due to earlier urbanization and the spread of nuclear families, and more important in Asia, tends to perpetuate a system of inequality from the very inception of a woman's life, Newland feels that while this pattern of familial control is susceptible to other structural changes, it can most successfully be overcome through education.

In all the issues examined by Newland, cross cultural and cross country comparisons are made. The use of statistics in such a cross country context, except in the most general sense, may not be entirely reliable, comparable or meaningful. However, the very lack of data on women makes even the smallest contribution to the body of knowledge of some importance. By not limiting her enquiry to developing or industrialized nations or to particular religions or cultures, Newland is able to present a much more balanced view of women's roles, their status and problems, and in doing so reveals the structural rather than the ideological nature of their limitations.

Shahida Lateef

## **MEDIA AND THE THIRD WORLD by D R Mankekar** **Indian Institute of Mass Communication.**

D R. Mankekar's book is a poor attempt at presenting the third world countries' viewpoint on mass communication. This thin volume is a collection of speeches and articles written over the last one and a half years and discusses among other things the over-publicised non-aligned News Pool; its aims and potentialities, the concept of freedom of information and its evolution, the New International Information Order and as many as eight pages on the UNESCO Declaration on Mass Media adopted at its General Conference in November 1978. The author has also made a hash of pinpointing the areas of differences between the developed and developing countries in the field of mass communication.

D R. Mankekar is a well-known journalist and is, according to the blurb, the author of 19 books. He was also the chairman of the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool and of the Indo-U S Sub-Commission on Films and Information. He has edited for over a decade 'The Times of India', 'Indian Express', and, finally, 'Motherland'.

With such impressive credentials, a reader naturally expects much more from the author — provocative, stimulating and discursive articles on what he has learned through the years. But he lets us down miserably. The book may, at best, only serve to add an extra line to his otherwise extensive *curriculum vitae*. Nothing more.

Mankekar at one stage clamors that the government should ensure that the media are manned by the '*right kind of personnel, adequately trained and aware of their public duties and social responsibilities*' (emphasis mine). I wonder why.

At another seminar he waxes eloquent on how the News Pool service is free of propaganda and bias even in countries with authoritarian rule, but miserably fails to convince the reader.

Also, there is not even a mention on the plight of the media in underdeveloped countries left alone whether they can cope with 'the industrialized West, holding the monopoly of international media and modern telecommunication technology.' This book, to remind, is on media and the third world.

The book even lacks an index and bibliography so useful to 'media men, social scientists, politicians and others interested in the subject'.

It is impossible to highlight in a short review all the features of this book. Suffice it to say there are faults too many. A reader only hopes Mankekar will come out soon with a book to match his reputation and experience.

Lalita Eswaran



# Communication

NHAVA Island is on the North-East side of Elephanta Island and needs to be preserved for the following reasons:

- 1 It was earmarked by the Maharashtra Government as a green belt but, subsequently, in spite of the protests of the Department of Urban Development and of CIDCO, the use was changed to provide a supply base for the ONGC's ships
  - 2 It is badly required as a green belt, both for the citizens of Bombay and the citizens of the proposed new City of Bombay which is coming up across the harbour. It is the only possibility now left to provide a green belt across the harbour. The Board of CIDCO has passed a resolution also to that effect.
  - 3 At present Elephanta Island is visited by a large number of visitors, the bulk of whom only go there for an outing and not to see the caves. These visitors, in fact, damage the caves and also the other archaeological sites of Elephanta which have yet to be excavated. The only possibility of diverting some of these visitors is to provide Nhava Island as an alternative. The Department of Archaeology and Museums and the Prince of Wales Museum have written to the Maharashtra Government in this regard.
  - 4 Nhava is the site of the oldest Nautical Training Institute in the country which was set up in 1910 well before the *Dufferin* and *Rajendra*. The Director General of Shipping and the National Union of Seafarers of India have both stressed the need to preserve this institute.
  - 5 The Yachting Association of India plans to set up a National Yachting Academy and it would be a matter of pride for Bombay and for Maharashtra if this Academy were to be located in Bombay. The Yachting Association have written formally to the State Government requesting for Nhava as the site for this Academy.
  - 6 Nhava is required as a base for marine sports such as rowing, swimming, yachting, etc. It is by far the best if not the only site available in Bombay for this purpose.
  7. The oldest marine museum in the country is located on Nhava Island. The National Maritime Museum have already made a formal request that they should be allowed to locate a portion of their activities on Nhava.
- Nhava is being severely damaged by the ONGC who wish to locate a supply base there and have taken over 140 acres of the island. However, the following facts may be borne in mind:
- (a) Enquiries made from people connected with shipping have cast doubts on the essentiality of a separate supply base for ONGC. ONGC are currently managing with only a few thousand square yards in Bombay Port whereas they have taken over 140 acres on Nhava Island.
  - (b) Even if a separate base is considered essential, this base could easily be located at Sheva which is adjacent to Nhava and which is completely barren.
  - (c) There will be no set-back to ONGC's operations in such a shift to Sheva since for the interim period they could continue using Bombay Port.
  - (d) In any case the land requirements of 140 acres are extremely high and can easily be cut down, particularly by locating some of the facilities one or two miles inland on the mainland.
- What is now required is
- (a) A re-examination to determine whether a separate base is in fact needed by ONGC.
  - (b) If such a base is essential, does this have to be in Bombay harbour itself.
  - (c) If this base is to be in Bombay harbour why can it not be at Sheva or other locations?



**At the Edge of Psychology**  
**Essays in Politics and Culture**  
**ASHIS NANDY**

In the six essays contained in this book, the author deals with several major issues and personalities of modern India — Rammohun Roy and the abolition of sati, the authoritarian personality and the political system it requires and generates, the social and cultural forces represented by Gandhi and his assassins, concepts of woman and womanhood, Indira Gandhi and the culture of Indian politics. At one plane, the essays define the outlines of a cultural psychology of Indian politics, at another they define and analyze the contradictions in the human personality that concretize the state of politics in a society

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**The Indo-Greeks**  
**A. K. NARAIN**

This book has been recognized as the most scholarly and detailed account of the rise and fall of an adventurous people — the Indo-Greeks. Setting up a kingdom in Bactria on the ruins of Alexander's empire they crossed the Hindu Kush and, in the 2nd century B.C., succeeded in occupying much of the Upper Indus Valley and the Punjab. Dr Narain's work is based mainly on the coins of the Indo-Greeks, which are their most important historical records. It has cleared up many misconceptions, and placed the history of the Indo-Greeks on a firmer basis of chronology than any other work.

Rs 55

**Churchill, Cripps and India 1939-1945**  
**R. J. MOORE**

This is the story of a missed opportunity. In this book, Professor Moore argues that Sir Stafford Cripps' mission to India in 1942 could, if successful, have prevented the ultimate partition of India. Indian participation in a power-sharing executive would have led to co-operation between Hindus and Muslims. The failure of the mission can be attributed to the baleful influence of Churchill, acting in support of the overcautious and often stubborn Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow. R. J. Moore is professor of History at the Flinders University of South Australia.

Rs 110

**Encounters: India's Westerly Trade in the Bronze Age**  
**SHEREEN RATNAGAR**

This study provides an overall view of the bronze age cultures (including those of Sumer, Akkad, Elam, Barbar and Umm an Nar, Yahya and Helmand cultures) spreading from the lower Mesopotamian plains to the Indus Valley, and the evidence for trade links between them and the Indus Valley civilisation. The author draws on both archaeological and literary sources for evidence of extensive trading patterns that existed in this period. The aim is not conclusive in-depth analysis of particular bodies of artefactual or textual data, but a stock-taking of all the published evidence and some interpretations of this evidence.

Forthcoming Rs 75



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(d) The land requirement of 140 acres must be cut down drastically after a re-assessment of the same.

The ONGC had gone ahead with work without obtaining the sanction of the Bombay Port Trust. Because of this the work on the island has come to a halt. This would provide a golden opportunity for a thorough review of the position by an impartial group such as the National Committee on Environmental Planning & Coordination (NCEPC).

The Maharashtra Government referred the question to a Committee whose first two recommendations are given below.

- 1 'The Committee strongly feels that in order to provide breathing areas across the harbour and to protect the ecological environment, the ONGC should be asked to relocate their project away from Nhava outside the congested Bombay Harbour Region.
- 2 'If it is not possible to relocate the project away from Bombay, then the ONGC should be asked to locate their project at Sheva where the ecological damage will be much less.'

**Uran**

The Bombay High pipeline terminates at Uran (Nagaon) on Karanja Island. The ONGC have about 80 hectares (190 acres) of land at Uran for their oil fractionation and other facilities. The Uran beach is the only beach on the other side of the harbour available for Bombay's residents and other residents of CIDCO's proposed new township. The State Government has instructed that a 600 metre wide strip of beach be kept clear. However, this is not enough since it is not possible to enjoy a beach with a massive industrial/commercial complex adjacent to it.

To preserve this beach it is suggested as follows:

- (a) Some of ONGC facilities have already come up here and it would not be possible to disturb the same. However, the bulk of the facilities have not yet come up and ONGC may be requested to relocate future activities a mile or two inland on the other side of the hill.
- (b) The above action would release a large amount of land which could then be preserved as a beach by CIDCO.

On receipt of a number of representations, the Maharashtra Government have officially taken up the matter with the Ministry of Petroleum.

Shyam Chainani  
 Navroze Mody  
 BOMBAY ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION GROUP  
 14th February, 1980.



# The Official

The image displays three rows of stylized, abstract shapes, likely representing a sequence of characters or symbols. The shapes are rendered in a high-contrast, black-and-white style, with thick, irregular outlines and some internal detailing. The top row contains three shapes, the middle row contains four, and the bottom row contains five. The shapes are highly stylized, resembling a mix of letters and abstract forms. The overall appearance is that of a high-contrast, black-and-white image, possibly a photocopy or a digital filter applied to a document.

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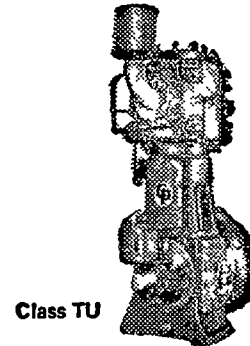
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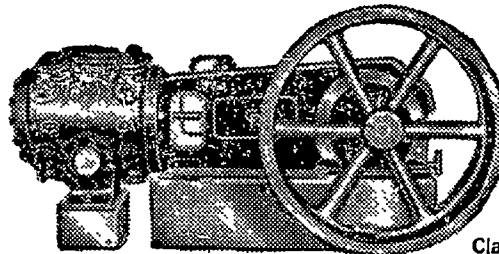
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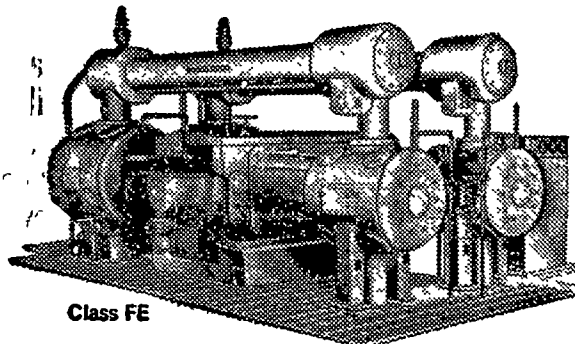
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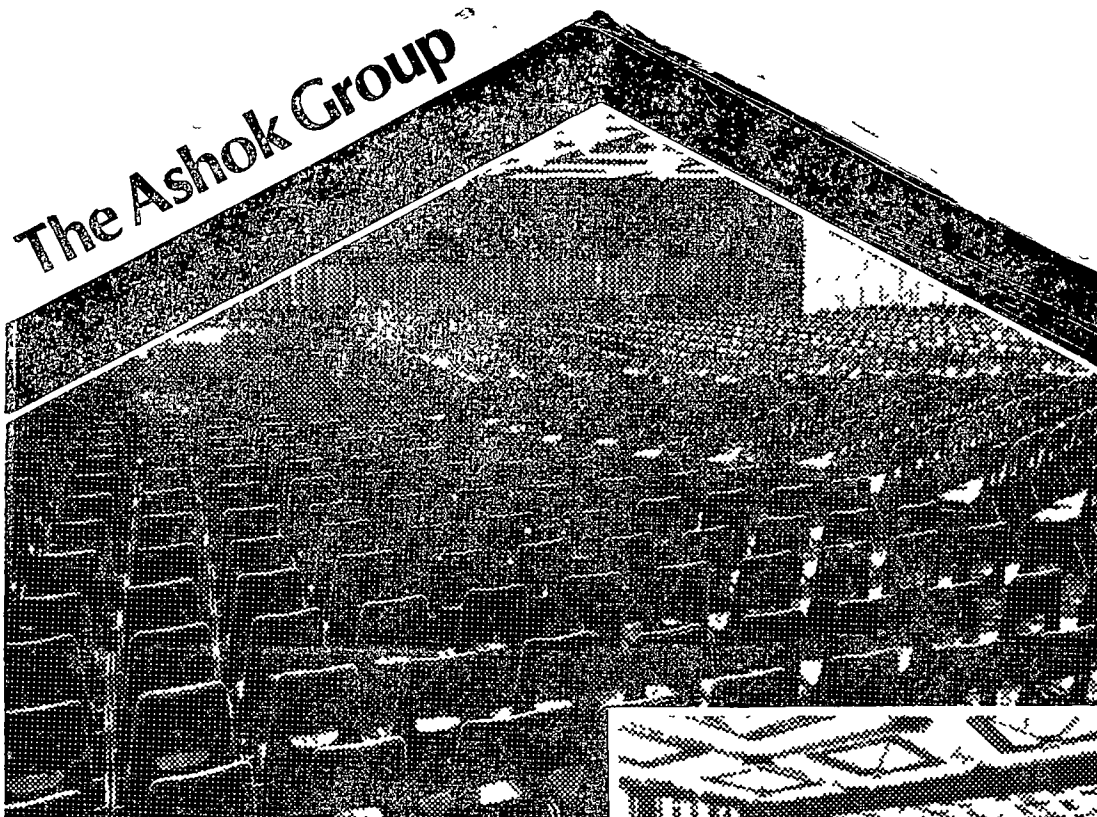
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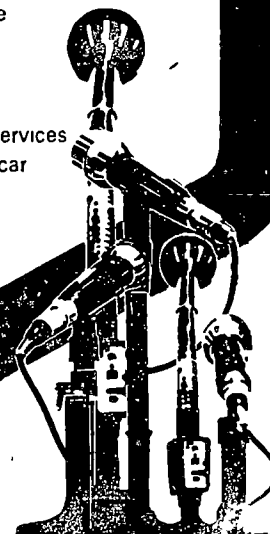


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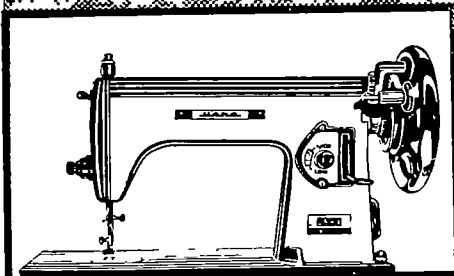
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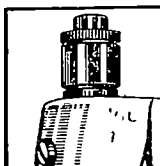
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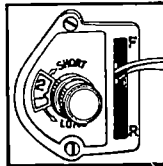
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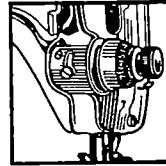
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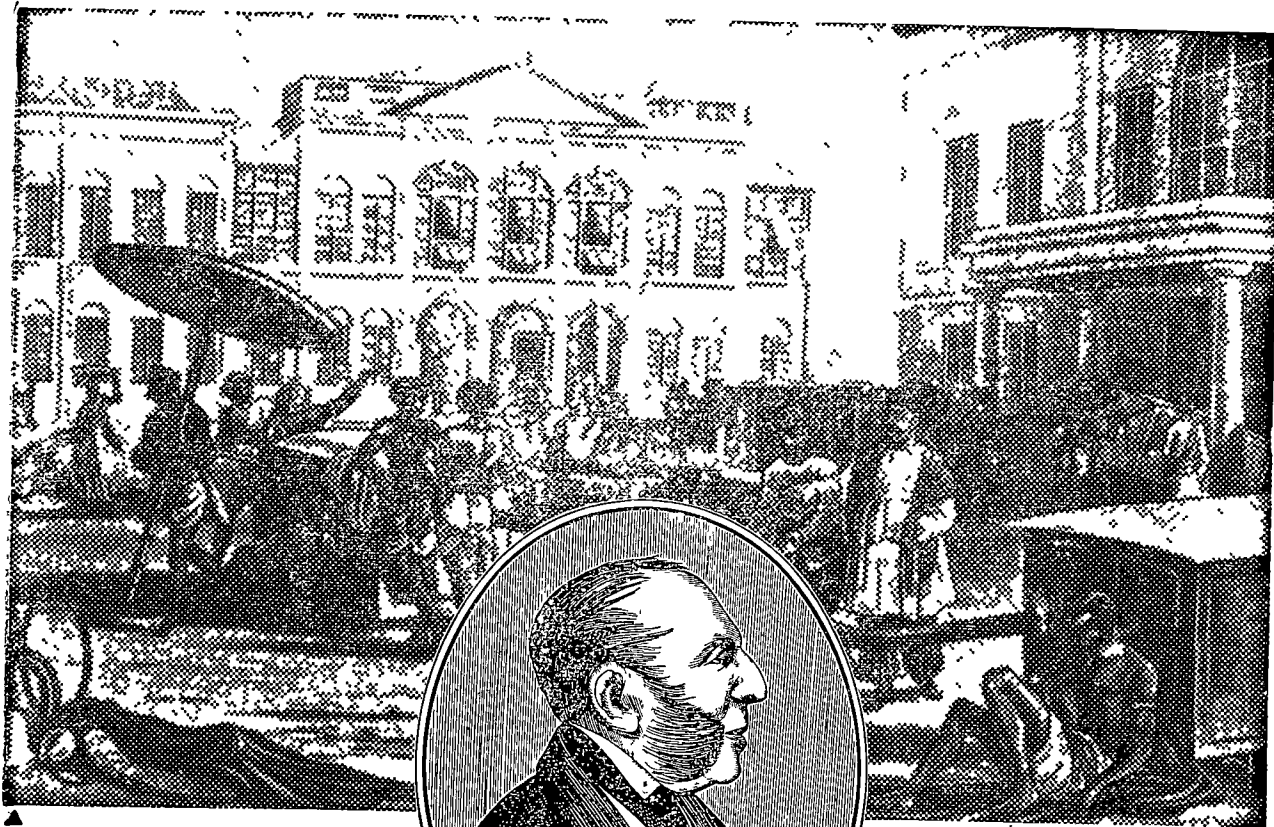
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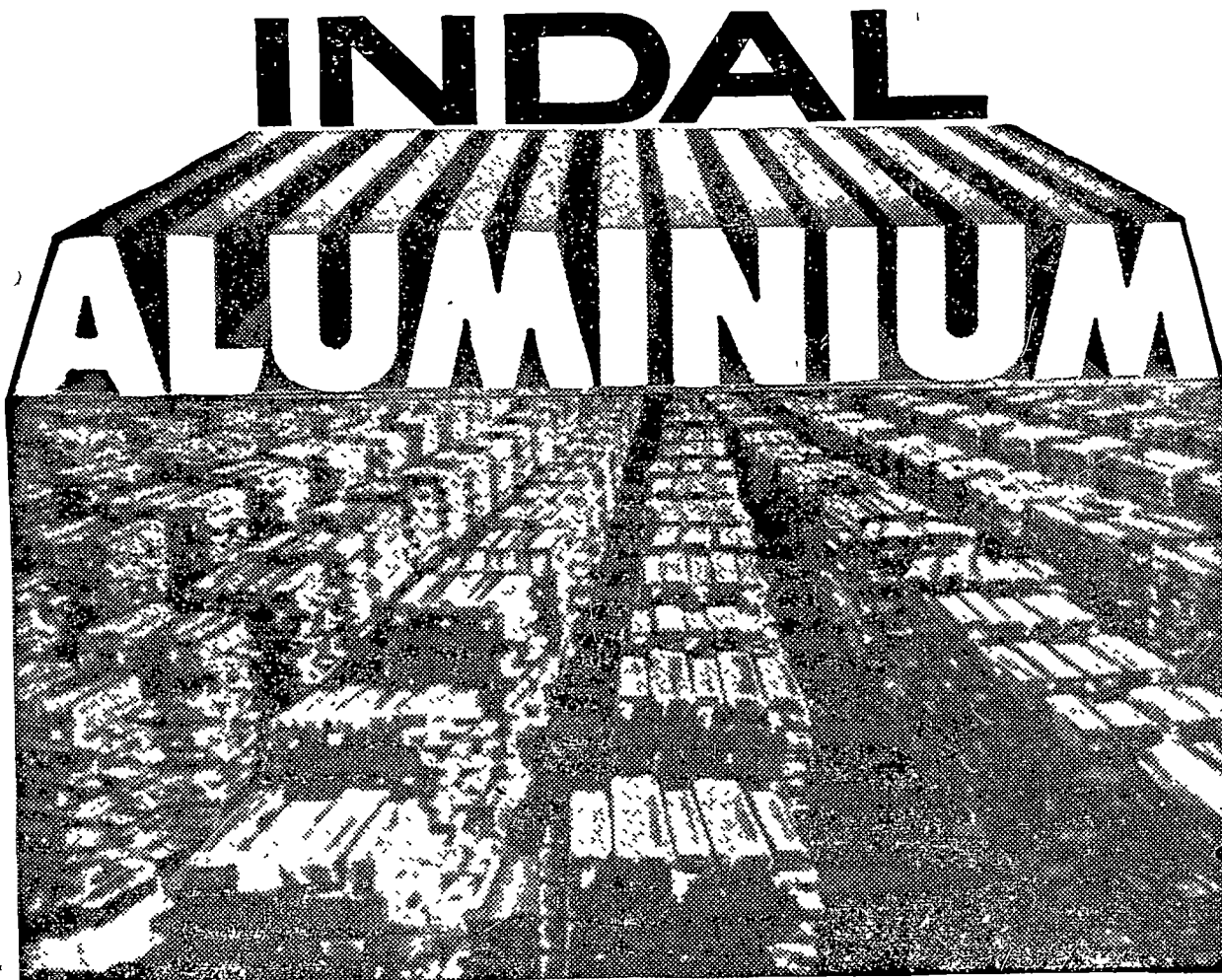


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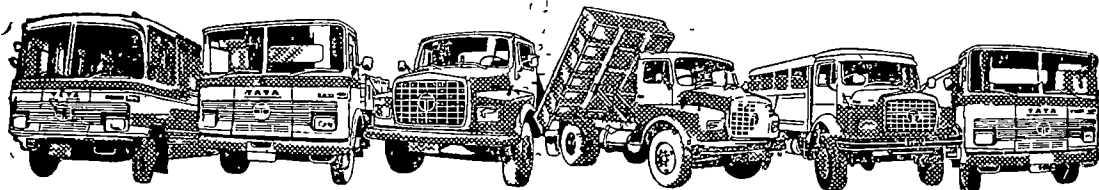
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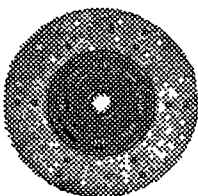
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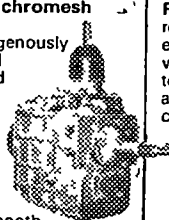
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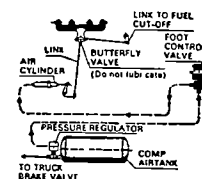
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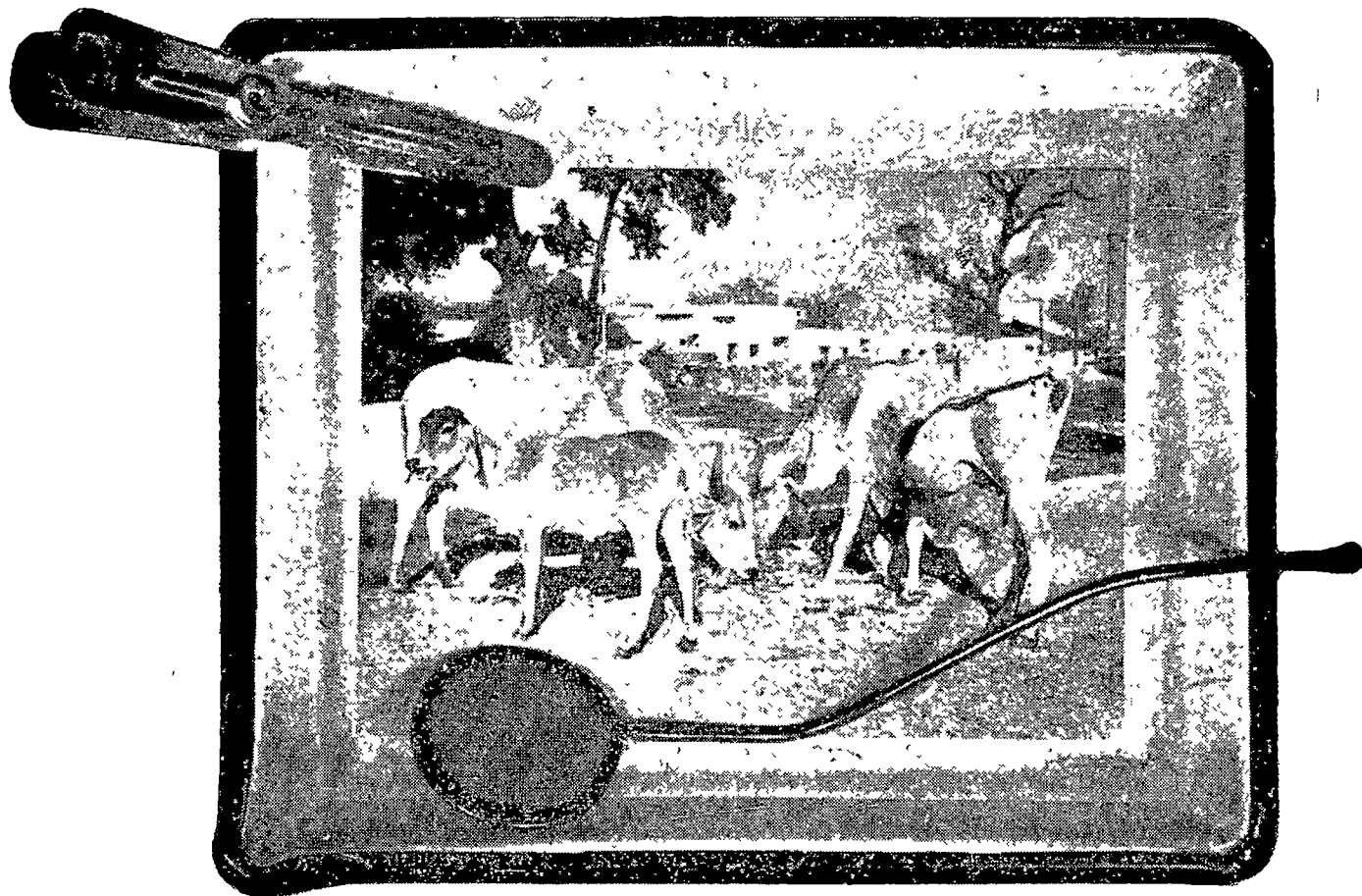
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TEXT : DEBATING AN AGENDA FOR INDIA



# 250

## THE VIOLENT PRESENT

a symposium on  
change and conflict  
in our society

symposium participants

### THE PROBLEM

A short statement of  
the issues involved

### AT THE VILLAGE

Mahendra Prasad Singh, Reader in Political  
Science, University of Delhi

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R C Prasad, Professor and Head,  
Department of Political Science,  
Magadh University, Bodh Gaya

### THE INDUSTRIAL FRONT

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Sachchidananda, Professor of Sociology,  
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# The problem

INDIA is the twentieth century's most complex traditional society caught up in the process of modernization that acquires rather unique features on account of its being a complex subcontinental society standing at the crossroads of history, with a rather heavy traditional cultural load, and confronted by baffling and contradictory models and strategies of development, yet striving hard to forge a national identity of its own, without cutting itself off from the global perspectives and culture

As we approached the third decade of our independence the process of change in our country not only accelerated but also intensified latent and manifest tensions, conflicts and violence. Evident is the erosion not only of the age-old traditional social and cultural consensus but also of the modern political and constitutional consensus evolved during the national independence movement and early post-independence period.

To an extent, conflict is a concomitant of change. The process of modernization often tends to confront groups and interests, in newly created political institutional arenas as well as in old and new habitats and streets, by breaking their earlier isolation in the traditional society in which they segmentally or hierarchically coexisted, entering into delimited working relationships greased by



a strange but understandable juxtaposition of structural oppression with internalized cultural legitimization. Modernization not only brings traditional, pre-industrial groups out of their structural niches but also creates new interests and groups along the way. It also robs the traditionally dominant groups of their cultural mystique, secure economic foundations and political dominance. Competitive electoral and party politics introduce a new criterion of stratification, which, coupled with diversification of economic and cultural enterprises, provide mobility opportunities to hitherto submerged and deprived groups. The unsettling processes unleashed by social, economic, political and cultural changes are often quickened and complicated by mobilizational and organizational strategies of trade unions and political parties, occasionally leading to parliamentary and street confrontations and conflicts. Along with modernization, the process of economic growth, especially in the absence of a development strategy emphasizing growth with equity and justice, tends to increase social, sectoral and regional imbalances and 'internal colonial' pockets.

However, there are in the process of modernization elements both of determinacy and choice. Our task is to understand them and suggest positive interventions. The articles that follow address themselves to some aspects of the truly complex problems of change and conflict in our society today.



# At the village

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THERE have been at least two conflicting images of the Indian village as an existential reality. An idealized romantic view of the village, attributed to Orientalists, and shared, with certain reformist reservations, by Gandhians, looks upon it as a self-sufficient, harmonious community impervious to vicissitudes of the larger political system. The other view, shared with varying ideological postures by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Marxists, describes the village as a den of poverty, ignorance, inequality and exploitation, riven by factionalism.

But, perhaps an empirically more relevant observation of the changing village scene has been rather cryptically made by Gunnar Myrdal, who has asserted that the essentially social and religious character of the Indian village is now changing and its functional features as an economic unit are becoming more salient.<sup>1</sup> To this one might add the recent trends of acceleration of social change and increasing politicization of the village which have tended, on the one hand, to overshadow everything else there, and, on the other, cast a lengthening 'ruralizing'<sup>2</sup> shadow over the larger political system as well.

Modern politics began in urban India around the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Originating in the coastal areas of the Presidency provinces of Bengal, Bombay, and Madras, it tended to penetrate into the hinterland percolating through the layers of religious, regional caste, and class components of the Indian society. The process of social and political awakening that gave rise to this new style of politics led by the English-educated new elites developed at uneven rates and degrees in different communities and regions. It developed earlier, for example, among Parsees and Hindus than among Sikhs and Muslims, earlier among the upper Hindu castes than among the lower, and earlier in the plains than in the hilly areas. Curiously, the *geographical* and *cultural* 'centres' did not overlap, diffusion of new culture and nationalism emanated from the coastal peripheries and tended to permeate into the geographical heartland.

Following independence, especially since the introduction of competitive

1 Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations* (Abridged by Seth S. King) (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 236.

2. The term is borrowed from Samuel

P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), ch. 7, who uses it in the rather specific context of "ruralizing elections" as the process through which the party system in a modernizing country adapts itself with the largely rural society by accommodating mass rural participation.



electoral politics based on universal adult franchise, a more intimate urban-rural interaction and attendant frictions as well as integration began. The ruling party elites sought to combine a 'reconciliatory' model of politics with planned economic development and gradual social change. Despite his charismatic mass appeal, Nehru had mainly leaned on intermediary political structures which had been gradually coming under the influence of rural political elites. The rise of rural elements was much more rapid in politics than in education and administration and the urban-industrial economy. This trend of gradual ruralization of politics had become manifest towards the later years of Nehru's Prime Ministership, though it has not perhaps run its full course even now.

**I**n the years immediately following Nehru's death in 1964 the ruralizing tendencies became stronger. Congress Party president, K. Kamaraj, and other rural-based central leaders and State Chief Ministers came into their own during the Prime Ministerial successions of Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1964 and Mrs. Indira Gandhi in 1966, and continued to provide a more collegial leadership at the centre until the end of the 1960s. The trend appeared to be somewhat arrested and even reversed when Mrs. Gandhi split the Congress Party towards the end of 1969 and risked a mid-term Lok Sabha election in 1971 in which she attempted to make a direct appeal to the people, bypassing the intermediary power structures, by then almost completely dominated by rural-based political elites. The move was a resounding success, and was replicated in the 1972 Vidhan Sabha elections. Following, in rather quick succession, the Gujarat and Bihar movements, the Emergency, and the brief interlude of the Janata Party rule at the centre, Mrs. Gandhi, employing a similar strategy, rode back to power again early this year.

The electoral restoration of her *personalized* party to a position of predominance has been interpreted by some as a 'nationalizing' trend in Indian politics overriding caste, communal and regional cleavages. Yet, along with a decline in the

institutionalization of the party system, the continuing under-currents of ruralizing trends cannot be overlooked by perceptive observers. The seemingly disparate phenomena of *ghatakud* between the B.L.D. and Jan Sangh constituents of the pre-split Janata Party, the continuing regional persistence, even though remaining unaggregated nationally, of farmers' and peasants' parties such as Lok Dal in U.P., Akali Dal in the Punjab, and Peasants' and Workers' Party in Maharashtra, the State government policy of job reservation for backward middle castes in Bihar and U.P., sugar cane farming-based cooperative capitalism and its powerful impact on Maharashtra State politics, increasing salience of farm lobby politics in Gujarat and Tamilnadu, caste riots and atrocities on Harijans — are all various manifestations of increasing social mobilization, economic diversification, and politicization of the countryside.

**B**esides, perhaps the first step on Mrs. Gandhi's political comeback trail, following the Emergency and her party's electoral debacle, was taken in May 1977 in Belchi, a sleepy intractable Bihar village she visited on elephant back for an on-the-spot study of an atrocious caste clash between middle caste Kurmis and Harijans there. Three more recent incidents in January and February this year in four villages — Narainpur in U.P. and Parasbigha, Dohia, and Pipra in Bihar — are parts of the same scenario, they clearly illustrate, among other things, the growing linkages between village and State and national levels of politics.

Narainpur happens to be a case of police atrocity on villagers, Parasbigha — Dohia that of a caste feud over socio-economic and political dominance between upper caste Bhumi-har Brahmins and backward middle caste Yadavas and Garerias, and Pipra that of a fierce dispute over agricultural wages between the backward middle caste Kurmis and the Harijans. But all the three are indicative of increasing salience in State and national politics of what happens in even remote and obscure villages. All of them received detailed front page coverage in the regional

and national press. They have been sought to be used as pretexts for demanding Presidential dismissal of the respective State governments — Lok Dal's in U.P. and Janata's in Bihar — and have received close attention by an obliging Congress (I) government at the centre.

**T**he traditional isolation and autonomy of the village has gradually been irreversibly breaking down. More and more villages are being caught into the slowly but steadily expanding networks of development administrations, transportation, media of mass communication and educational institutions. The Green Revolution has been less than systematically intensive and extensive, but it has tended to transform subsistent farming into commercial agriculture at least for a section of the villagers, leading to the expansion of marketing networks. The areas affected by agricultural modernization are also generally marked by increasing political mobilization of agricultural workers and by increase in wages. Moreover, the villagers have become more mobile than ever before.

Rural to urban migration in India has not been a simple matter of movement of undifferentiated masses of people from the village to the town and city. First, not all sections of the rural population have been equally prone or responsive to the local push or urban pulls in moving out of the village, nor have all of them ended up in similar positions in the urban society. Traditionally, the top (upper caste zamindars and kisans) and bottom (lower caste landless agricultural workers) strata of the rural society have been more likely to urbanize than the middle peasant castes who have, however, more recently also joined the trend.

Second, despite spatial mobility there has existed a certain degree of continuity between the status of the migrating groups within the rural society they leave and the urban society where they arrive. By and large, the urbanizing upper castes have been more likely to join the ranks of the liberal professions, government services, and business; the middle castes the ranks of the police, artisans, skilled workers, and the scheduled castes or Harijans, the ranks of industrial



workers and menial staff in government, municipal, and private offices and enterprises. There have been, of course, overlaps at the edges of the categories and exceptions all along, which have tended to increase over the years especially since independence

Third, there has been a variation in the magnitude and intensity of ties retained by the urbanizing groups with the village. Retention of rural ties is a function of several factors such as landownership, nature of urban job, family structure, motivation of the migrant, and so on. Where the upper or middle caste migrants happen to own a decent family farm and come from a village or wider region having a fair degree of concentration of their own castemen (i.e., constitute a 'dominant caste'<sup>3</sup> as conceptualized by M N Srinivas), they tend to retain, despite their urban occupational involvements, vigorous economic and social ties with the village, either by frequent personal visits or through kins in joint families

Also, depending upon their political motivation, they have often used these resources and ties to their advantage to build up political careers for themselves in local, State, or national politics. Where one or both of these factors — landownership and numerical preponderance — are lacking, the migrants either retain a politically indifferent minimal social presence in the village for carrying on farming operation with the aid of kins or paid managers (a pattern more typical of castes whose traditional occupation had been farming), or they tend to sell their land in the village to seek a fuller integration with the urban society (a pattern typical of traditionally non-farming castes such as Kayasthas or absentee landlords).

The upper and middle caste peasants with small holdings usually stay on the land but try to send their children and kins to study or work in urban areas. They are caught up in a situation in which one part of the family maintains a precarious ex-

istence in agriculture as subsistent peasants or sharecroppers, while the other goes to work on small salaries or wages in the city or town, usually leaving the wife and children behind in the extended family and visiting them during major festival holidays. Torn between the village and the city, and trapped in a precarious existential struggle for life, in both the milieus, they tend to be politically apathetic and inefficacious, but far from alienated, atomised individuals of the 'mass' society' conceptualised by William Kornhouser<sup>4</sup>

In the case of lower caste landless rural migrants to the city, the rural roots of landownership and extended family ties are absent, their transplantation from wretched rural *bustis* to the urban 'slums' is more or less direct and the break is almost complete. Their rural roots are physically snapped, but they carry their rustic cultural baggage along and continue to lend, at least for a generation, the touch of the country to the city. Their next generation, truly the children of the city, tends to become more steeped in urban working class subculture and political behaviour

India is credited with the longest and broadest mass-based nationalist movement among the former western colonies in Asia and Africa. Rajni Kothari is right, however, in suggesting a caveat: "It is possible to over-emphasize the 'depth' of the movement. Even after all the efforts of the Congress to penetrate into the rural areas, large masses still were unaffected, their apolitical existence continued as ever. The success of the Congress was only relative — relative to the failures of earlier efforts at politicization"<sup>5</sup>

In terms of class composition, the nationalist movement was essentially based on the new middle class professional and industrial and business elites in urban areas, while the rural social structure remained primarily feudal with its top echelons tending to be allegiant to the British Raj. The rural social structure in this

period remained based on relatively unpenetrated villages which were subsistent but more or less self-sufficient feudal or feudalistic entities composed of a narrow stratum of the landlords, moneylenders, Brahman *purohits* at the top, reasonably rich and somewhat poorer peasants and sharecroppers in the middle, and landless agricultural workers and servicing castes at the bottom

The top stratum was commonly, though not invariably, upper caste; the middle stratum, upper and middle caste, and the bottom, typically scheduled caste and tribe with some marginal lower-middle caste elements. Social mobilisation and tutelary nationalist politicization faintly reached the two upper strata of the village community and met with greater receptivity from the middle band, especially its upper caste components<sup>6</sup>

The abolition of zamindari/talukdari/jagirdari systems following independence removed the predominantly upper caste traditional village landlords from the top of the rural stratification system. This structural change led to the rise of the reasonably prosperous class of medium and small farmers and upper peasantry. It is notable, however, that this social force constitutes a 'class' only in the structural sense, pointing to the convergence of economic position and interests of its diverse caste clusters and regional segments

The psychological dimension of a common class consciousness is bedevilled by caste divisions and regional dispersal characteristic of this group. For example, the recent caste clashes in Parasbigha and Dohia villages in Gaya district illustrate the tension between the upper caste and middle caste components of this class. Also, the divergent, or, at any rate, unaggregated political lines and organizational entities of the Akali Dal, the Lok Dal, and the Peasants' and Workers' Party illustrate the

<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed analysis of this trend from a slightly different perspective, see my 'Social Structure, Electoral Process, and Party System in India', *Indian Political Science Review* (Delhi), forthcoming. Of related interest is D L Sheth, 'Politics of Caste Conflict', *Seminar* (India 1978, Annual No.) January 1979.

<sup>4</sup> William Kornhouser, *The Politics of Mass Society* (Glencoe Free Press, 1959)

<sup>5</sup> Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India* (Boston, Little Brown, 1970), pp 78-79.

<sup>3</sup> See M N Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India* (Berkeley University of California Press, 1969), pp 151-152.



regionally diverse political expressions of this class

The gradual rise of this class came to manifest itself on *economic* as well as *political* planes. Their economic ascent was facilitated by a number of factors. First, they did not have too bad a start to begin with, inasmuch as the size of their landholdings, though small and fragmented in a 'crazy quilt' pattern, was not too small, from Indian standards, to provide a basis for a slow transition from a subsistent farming to a surplus one, howsoever meager. Second, this trend came to be matched with — and aided by — the government-initiated plans for agricultural development involving, among other things, expansion of irrigational resources like water and power and provision of institutional credits and subsidies for agricultural inputs. Third, there was a subcultural factor contributing to the economic rise of this class.

One can observe in this class a tradition of a sort of 'Protestant ethic' emphasizing hard work and austere living as against the life-style of extravagance and conspicuous consumption typical of upper caste traditional village landlords. This applies, in varying degrees, to the upper caste as well as middle caste components of this class. The larger middle caste component is, for example, even less affected by status-based avoidance of manual work on the family farm (by male members of the family in general and by women even more strictly) than the smaller upper caste component.<sup>7</sup> This ethic of austerity and hard work in this class, originally rooted in its economic situation, was also reinforced by social reform movements like the Arya Samaj in the past and by sects such as Jai Gurudev more recently.<sup>8</sup>

7 Andre Beteille, *Six Essays in Comparative Sociology* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 82-83, writes 'In India peasant households which are of high social status (or believe themselves to be of high social status) generally discourage their women from working in the fields and they may therefore be obliged to hire workers regularly for particular agricultural operations even when their holdings are of small size'.

8 The Jai Gurudev Dharma Pracharak Sanstha founded by Jai Gurudev Tulsidas

The economic rise of this class of owner cultivators has generally characterized both its upper caste and middle caste components, but its political rise is more characteristic of the latter. In fact, the upper castes, who earlier occupied the centre of the political states in all States and regions, have now been driven to the margins by the backward middle castes. Of the three caste clusters — the upper ('Forward'), Backward, and Harijans — the intermediate one happens to be numerically preponderant. This, along with their increasing agriculture based prosperity, has greatly contributed to their political ascendance. Their rise is more rapid and spectacular in politics than in education, administration, and urban economy. But having emerged as the politically dominant social force, they have in the last few years been tenaciously striving to hop into the areas of their lag from the areas of their lead.

A case in point is the 'backward caste-dominated State governments' policy of extension of job reservation quotas, so far available only to Harijans, to the backward middle castes in several States, most recently in Bihar and U.P. They have also been taking advantage of government schemes of credits and incentives for setting up small scale industries and have begun to join the ranks of new entrepreneurs and businessmen.

The most recent strand of social change in rural India is the politicization of the Harijans.<sup>9</sup> This is by

in 1964 in Mathura commands considerable following in U.P., Delhi and neighbouring States especially among the backward castes. His electoral blessings and his followers' support were solicited by the top leaders of various political parties during the 1980 Lok Sabha election. It seems to me that in view of the non-millennarian character of Hinduism, the most novel feature of the religious ideology of the Jai Gurudev sect seems to be the transposition of the *satayuga* from the past into the future, following the *Kaliyuga*. For a brief report on this new sect of mass Hinduism, see Naresh Kaushik, 'Jai Gurudev Jab Unka Satayuga Ayega', 'Dinaman' (New Delhi), January 6-12, 1980, pp. 11-14.

9 For an earlier and more detailed formulation of my ideas on the analysis of this trend, see my 'Political Arrival of Harijans', *Seminal* (New Delhi), November, 1979.

no means an entirely new phenomenon inasmuch as the Harijans have formed part of electoral political arithmetic right from the beginning. However, whereas they had earlier formed the manipulated parts of the hierarchical patron-client networks presided over and controlled by the economically dominant upper and middle caste patrons, the clients have now tended to assume autonomous political postures. Earlier, fissions in the overall patron-client networks in the village were caused by factionalism among the patrons themselves; the challenges to their dominance are now increasingly coming from below. In fact, this increasing 'vertical' articulation of conflicts has tended to promote some measure of 'horizontal' unity among the patrons.

After halting and often uncertain steps towards autonomous political participation, the Harijans now seem to have crossed the participatory threshold and become a politically relevant public in their own right. It may well be, however, that the Harijans have moved out of the political tutelage of the locally dominant castes' political leaders and become available for political mobilization and manipulation by national leaders like Mrs. Gandhi. In an undeveloped country where radical mass movements have largely failed to appear, a populist national leader who demonstratively pioneers in reaching out to patronize the poor tends to transitionally emerge as an effective mobilizer of the masses.

This phase of comparative politicization has been marked by the greatest amount of conflict and even violence. This should not be surprising. Compared to other caste clusters which are quite uneven internally in economic status and resources, Harijans are more or less a structurally unique social stratum in that they constitute the bottom of the social stratification defined either in terms of caste or class. In other words, in their case, *caste* and *class* tend to overlap. This deepens the cultural incongruity between them and other caste clusters above them. This has since times immemorial helped stereotype Harijans in certain social, economic, and political roles, the common element in all of which happens



to be their structural dependence on and psychological deference to their social superiors

In recent times education, public employment, cottage and small scale industries and business, and, above all, politics—all with incentives from the government — have opened up opportunities, with varying degrees of viability, for Harijans to move up in social and political stratification systems. Spurred on by religious revitalization and revivalism,<sup>10</sup> modern political ideologies, competitive party politics and government welfare policies, the Harijans have of late also begun to assert their identity and rights within the local village communities. All these departures from the stereotyped images of typical Harijan status and behaviour create intense cognitive dissonance for the upper and middle caste clusters who almost impulsively resist mobility aspirations and strivings of Harijans by strategies ranging from subtle discrimination to atrocious reprisals.

The cases of atrocities which are by now legion indicate (1) that conflicts are both more fierce and frequent between the structural neighbours, i.e., backward middle castes and Harijans rather than between the top and bottom social strata, (2) that instead of being confined to the time and arena of electoral politics, the conflicts have tended to spill over the entire social space and time cycle, and (3) that conflicts are more endemic in traditional occupational structures than in modern, in rural settings than in urban, and at the local level of the political system than at State or national Politics has been the walk of life in which Harijans have moved ahead faster than in, say, education, administration, and business and industries. And the growing politicization of Harijan masses has tended to invest the early token Harijan leaders with a new political weight and clout as well as throw up a new generation of more assertive Harijan political leadership. The party system and the larger political and economic systems are still in the process of adaptation with this new social input.

<sup>10</sup> *Adi Dharma* in the Punjab, Balmiki *mandirs* in North-Western India, and neo-Buddhism in Maharashtra and elsewhere are cases in point.

# Electoral violence

R C PRASAD

IN this paper I propose to dwell mainly on electoral and political violence, drawing chiefly on the experience of Bihar. For, the State of Bihar is in a state of perpetual violence today. Until some time past, the credit went to West Bengal.<sup>1</sup> Today, no

<sup>1</sup> Morris-Jones writes of the year 1971 'The main concentration (of violence) was in West Bengal where it flowed from the desperate rivalry and antagonisms between the Marxists and the Naxalites and from the attempt of the latter to render the electoral part of the political system inoperable' W H Morris-Jones, *Politics Mainly Indian* (Madras: Orient Longman, 1978), p. 170.



State seems to be surpassing Bihar in respect of electoral violence (perhaps in respect of other kinds of social and political violence too), even though stories of violence now flow in from almost all parts of the country.<sup>2</sup> Even in Bihar, social and political violence is more generally rampant in the central and west-central part, covering the districts of Begusarai, Patna, Nalanda, Nawadah, Gaya, Bhojpur and Rohtas. The villages of Bajitpur, Belchi, Bishrampur, Parasbigha-Dohya, Pipra, and some others (which have not yet become so famous but may hit the newspaper headlines any day) lie all in this part of the State.<sup>3</sup>

Certainly, these are not amongst the poorest of the districts of the State, rather, they can easily be reckoned amongst the prosperous areas.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, in this part of the State several kinds of revolutions are occurring simultaneously. The revolution in communication is symbolized by the transistor which, when it began in the mid-sixties, the rural fashionables would love to carry it on their shoulders wherever they walked. The congestion on the roads of the district towns created by the growing number of taxis and minibuses symbolises the revolution in trans-

portation. The 'revolution'—or whatever it is—in education is now best symbolized by the ubiquitous presence of educated idlers in the villages and the towns and cities of Bihar. To excel all, electoral and political violence, including the inter-caste violence, now symbolizes the revolution in country-made arms: pipe guns and pistols and hand grenades.<sup>5</sup>

Nor, so far, do the poor Harijans generally supply the manpower of the gangs of armed musclemen who enact the incidents of organized violence. Rather, it has been discovered in most instances that the manpower is provided by (even) the college educated, trouser-clad youngsters, smart enough to travel in buses and trains without tickets and to grab 'tickets' during elections, which their seniors and elders often fail to obtain. These youngsters, it is believed, belong mostly to the 'traditionally' forward (Brahmin, Bhumihar Brahmins, Rajputs, Kayasthas rarely) as well as the neo-forward castes (Kurmis, Yadavas and Koiris, etc).<sup>6</sup> Many of them have been the recipients of amoral, 'useless' education imparted at ill-equipped institutions of higher education that have grown like mushrooms since the early sixties.<sup>8</sup>

What is further to be noted is that violence in Bihar is not the preserve of cities.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, many of the sparks of violence that one now often comes across in some of the cities are part of the occurrences that are taking place in the rural areas. Reports of

violence actually overflow from the countryside now. Villagers in many areas in these districts often have to undergo sleepless nights, both because the electricity is supplied to the village farms mostly during the nights and (what is more important here) because of the lurking danger of violence. The old balance and stability, called community life, has been disturbed, and a new balance is taking time to shape.<sup>10</sup>

In electoral violence, too, these central and west-central districts are reckoned as the leading ones. Yet it would be misleading to omit to add that, in regard to electoral violence, almost the entire State displays broadly the same pattern, which it will here be our endeavour to articulate and analyse.

Violence is now an inextricable part of the political process attending the village panchayat, municipal, State and parliamentary elections. Deployment of armed musclemen has fast become an unavoidable necessity for every serious candidate who wants to win these elections. Although systematic data are yet to be gathered, it is easy to say that few panchayat elections are held nowadays where such men have remained immobilized. In Chenari Block in the district of Rohtas, for example, of the eighteen panchayats, only in the case of two can it be said with some definitiveness that violence did not occur during the last (1978) pan-

Magadh University, and, in 1972, the Mithila University were created. Several hundred new colleges also started operating in the State soon after these universities were created. The federation of teachers of these colleges are now clamouring for being taken over by the university's own management, so that the regular payment of their salaries could be ensured, the only thing that happens by way of improvement after their take-over. Indeed, other things, including teaching, deteriorate, obviously, because the State too cannot provide for all the requirements of these institutions.

<sup>9</sup> Compare Samuel P. Huntington, *op cit*.

<sup>10</sup> 'The commercialization of agriculture and the socio-economic development of the countryside undermine the rural basis for patron-client politics.' Samuel P. Huntington and Joan M. Nelson, *No Easy Choice, Political Participation in Developing Countries* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> To quantify and compare the scale of violence is, however, no easy exercise. Here it is largely impressionistic.

<sup>3</sup> To this list some add Aurangabad district, which, too, falls in this part of the State. See V. S. Maniam, 'A State Gone Mad', *The Statesman*, 17 Feb. 1980, pp. 1 and 10. Newspapers have not, however, given much prominence to the murders that have occurred in some Rohtas villages near the Kaymur range of hills. In that area the clashes between the Binds, a backward caste of traditional land diggers, and the Rajputs, the traditionally dominant caste in eastern Rohtas villages, are now an almost daily occurrence. One Ramashish Bind, a terror name in the area, was shot in an encounter with the police after killing a dozen Rajputs.

<sup>4</sup> 'In modernizing countries, violence, unrest, and extremism are more often found in the wealthier parts of the country than in the poorer sections.' Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Bomay Vakils, Feffer and Simons, 1975), p. 28. The quote is from this adapted volume. The original has been published by the Yale University Press, 1968.

<sup>5</sup> One estimate is that there are 'at least 50,000 armed strongmen and killers all over the State.' *The Statesman*, 17-18 February 1980, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> In 1979, in one of the village dacoities the criminals who were captured were students of an important college of the Magadh University. During elections, the college students constitute the bulk of the membership of the gangs of booth-capturers.

<sup>7</sup> Bertrand Russell called the modern system of education 'useless' in the sense that a university degree is not tailor-made to a particular use.

<sup>8</sup> There was only one university until 1952, the Patna University. In 1952, the University of Bihar was brought into existence. In 1960, the Bhagalpur University and the Ranchi University, in 1962, the



chayat elections, while in two-thirds of the panchayats, brute force in various forms was used to capture the posts of the panchayat chiefs. Municipal elections are relatively less violent, because of the easy access of the police force to polling booths in a municipal area. Yet booth-capturing is artfully accomplished there too. Between assembly and parliamentary elections, the latter until recently used to be much more peacefully conducted.

**W**hile its present scale is a very recent development, violence has not been taboo in mass electoral and political behaviour in India ever.<sup>11</sup> Violent incidents of some kind have always marked the electoral and political behaviour since even before the attainment of independence. District Board elections were seldom completely free from some kind of overt or covert violence. In the election to the Patna District Board in Bihar, at the Bedi village booth in Griak Police Station, there was full-scale violence in which the supporters of two major candidates (one was a long-standing Chairman of the District Board) tried to chase away the supporters of each other. This happened in 1946.

Earlier than that, the elephant of an important rich candidate was used for a similar purpose in a similar election in Samastipur. These are not solitary instances, rather, they form part of a pattern characterising District Board and other elections in pre-independence days. As, however, the franchise was limited and booths were few, the scale of such violence also was much less then. And, as the countryside was then truly innocent of fire-arm technology, all that were generally used were canes or

staves or, at best, such lethal weapons as spears.

**T**he first three elections were relatively free from large scale violence. Yet, certain kinds of malpractices were always resorted to. One was to ask the unreliable, but controllable, voters of the weaker sections not to insert the ballot paper inside the candidate's box but rather surreptitiously carry it back in their pocket. When several such ballots were collected, one trusted voter would be asked to put them all into the ballot box of the preferred candidate while casting his own vote. The change-over from the 'ballot system' to the 'marking (stamping) system', that occurred in 1962, altered the context, outdating this non-violent method of pressurizing the voters of the weaker sections to vote in favour of the candidate preferred by the dominant elite of the village.

Yet, the 1962 election was not marked by any large-scale violence. This could be due to two factors. (1) Nehru was then still on the scene, and his victory was taken for granted, as the opposition was fragmented and weak. (2) The changeover was a new thing and the art of responding to it was yet to be developed and practised on a large scale.

The 'marking system', obviously, left little scope for surreptitiously casting the votes of the weaker sections in accordance with the wishes of the dominant section of the local population. Application of brute force, thus, remained the only way out to intimidate the non-supporters from coming to the polling booths. Before Nehru died in 1964, the dominant Congress leaders of most States had already passed away. The death of Nehru finally created an environment for the possibility of a political change everywhere. Mrs Gandhi, who had taken over the office of the Prime Minister on the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri only a year before the 1967 election, had yet to emerge from her period of probation. Furthermore, not only the State Congress leadership, but even the central leadership of the Congress Party had been factionalized. In such a context, the opposition parties also hoped and worked up the euphoria for a change.

As a consequence, violence marked even the electioneering during the 1967 election. In many areas the students and others turned violent in the course of their 'Congress Harao' campaign. They burnt Congress flags and the Congressmen's white caps and jeeps. They even manhandled some Congress workers and candidates. Such violent incidents, a report of that time comments, were however of 'lesser consequence compared to the murderous attack on Madhu Limaye (in the course of his electioneering) in his own constituency'<sup>12</sup>. (But the attack on Madhu Limaye had a feedback effect. Congress candidates for the Bihar Assembly lost heavily in, and around Limaye's parliamentary constituency.)

**P**olling in the 1967 General Election was disturbed in a large number of constituencies. At over a dozen booths polling had even to be suspended. Informal reports from a large number of constituencies indicated widespread disturbances all over the State. Impersonation was also resorted to on a large scale. The Report of the Election Commission on the Fourth General Election makes specific mention of adjournment of poll and the need for repoll in Bihar on account of 'serious disturbances or apprehended breach of peace'.<sup>13</sup> 'The Fourth General Election in Bihar,' the *Statesman* commented, 'has perhaps set up a record for widespread disorder and serious clashes'.<sup>14</sup> Trouble-evading presiding officers of these booths, however, made only a few formal reports against the mass-scale impersonation that was practised,

12 R.C. Prasad, *Political Transition in Bihar* (Bodh Gaya: Magadh University, Survey Research Unit, Mimeo.), p. 2-25. Professor V.P. Varma in his report on the Fourth General Election feelingly commented, 'If even fifty per cent of what has been reported in the newspapers about the rule of violence prior to the election is correct, it is indicative of a dangerous portent which may eventually bring about the collapse of the democratic machinery.' See V.P. Varma, *A Study of the Fourth General Elections in Bihar* (Patna: Institute of Public Administration, Patna University 1967), p. 71.

13 India, Election Commission, *Report on the Fifth General Election in India, 1971-72* (Narrative and Reflective Part), p. 81.

14 *The Statesman*, 22/23 February 1967, p. 9.

11 This, however, is not to ignore the greatness of the great ones of Indian politics of either pre-independence or post-independence days. Nor is it to belittle the contributions of the luminaries of Indian politics who did their utmost to train the Indian mind in the art of peaceful exercise of democratic rights by the citizens and authority, by the functionaries of the state. The contributions of Gandhi, Nehru, Lohia, Jayaprakash, Kripalani, and Morarji and others will continue to beckon our path of democratic progress. Yet, violence that has marked the last few elections, at all levels, can never do credit to our civilization and our polity.



especially by young people, students and others<sup>15</sup>

The election of 1967 very well demonstrated that winning an election needed total voting in a candidate's favour only at one-third of the polling booths in a constituency. In later elections, therefore, all pragmatically-oriented candidates (and are not all politicians pragmatic-minded?) made all-out efforts to profit from the newly discovered methodology of winning an election.

The 'mid-term' poll of 1969 pushed the process to a big step further. As we then reported: 'If the mid-term poll is any indication, ballot and bullet would now go together to win the election the ballot must be backed by the bullet. Impersonation ceased to be an art to be practised secretly (by a few initiated) with necessary artifice; it became a very common device to win the poll, acquiesced in by the gun shy polling officers, and openly resorted to by the (dominant) local group having superiority of fire arms. In some instances, to gain such superiority the rifle of one local group had to be melowed by the sten gun of the other party. It all came to be called the device of booth-control.'<sup>16</sup>

**T**he device of booth-control or booth-capturing is a crude device at any rate. It consists in frightening away through the display and, when very necessary, through the actual use of fire-arms all unfavourable voters and thus prevent them from coming to the polling station to cast their votes. Under the umbrella of superior firearms, the favourable voters are then induced to vote as many times as the situation warrants. The device has been refined further during each successive election. Now it has gone to the extent that one of the wielders of fire-arms impells the polling officers themselves to stamp the ballot papers and cast the votes in favour of the preferred candidate.

15 R C Prasad, *Political Transition in Bihar*, p 2 30

16 R C Prasad, *Political Transition in Bihar*, p 6 17

Booth capturing has thus clearly been encouraged by the timidity or, may be, covert collusion of the administrative staff conducting the poll, who have been taking the facetious plea that they could not prevent anybody from casting a vote until his identity had been challenged. But the question remains, who will challenge the identity, when the polling staff permits the same person to stamp as many ballots as he asks for. The administrative staff seldom makes a report of such incidents (except perhaps when they themselves have been manhandled or severely beaten). For they would not put themselves into the trouble of visiting the courts to follow up their report when summoned to do so. That may be too much of personal trouble for the sake of a romantic belief in democracy.

**B**ihar leads in booth-capturing, but the practice of booth-capturing is not confined to Bihar. About the February 1971 election, the Election Commission reports that a repoll had to be conducted at 66 polling stations because of the forcible removal of ballot boxes: 52 in Bihar, 3 in Haryana, 6 in Jammu and Kashmir, one in Nagaland, one Orissa, and 3 in Uttar Pradesh.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the new virus of booth-capturing has now spread to other States. In the context of the public euphoria that enveloped the elections of 1977, it was not easy to disentangle the contributions of booth-capturing and the Emergency to giving the Janata Party a complete victory in all the North-Indian States. Yet, it must be said that the collapse of the electoral administration at the level of polling stations since 1967 must have contributed its share to the augmentation of the percentage of votes of the winning candidates. The Lok Sabha election of January 1980, conducted under the auspices of a weak caretaker government, was, however, marked by a greater accentuation of booth-capturing than has characterised our elections since 1967.

There is also another very significant aspect of this growing incidence of electoral and political violence

17 India, Election Commission, *Report on the Fifth General Election*, pp 82-89.

that needs to be noted. In 1967 and 1969 the activists of electoral and political violence were faceless and nameless persons. By 1971, they had become identifiable figures and were named in political circles.<sup>18</sup> During the seventies they further entrenched themselves in politics. They gradually grew into a contingent factor in the Indian political process. No political party could ignore them. They became as salient to the Indian political-electoral process as the moneybags. Today, as the eighties begin, many of them have already found their way into the 'sovereign' parliament of the country. Electoral violence in 1967 was an amateurish activity, it could then be brushed aside as hooliganism. By 1971, such roles had got professionalized. Yet, such activists kept themselves in the sidings, only controlling their mentor/protege from behind. Now they have taken over the reins themselves.

**T**he sequence of events presented here may be disputed but not the process through which such activists in electoral-political violence have ushered themselves into the arena of politics. They are the new professionals of Indian politics, and they would now set the tone and temper of the politics of the country. Until now, they did so, to an extent, at the village, the municipal, and the district or, at best, the State level. Now they will perhaps call the tune at the national level, too, to a great extent. Their formal recruitment into the politics of the country now adds a new dimension to the profession of politics in India. Indian politics is now conducted in the same idiom top to bottom. There are neither 'two political cultures' nor 'three political idioms' in India now, for all these have been welded into one.<sup>19</sup>

18 Some such names were recounted by some state level leaders recently. See *The Statesman*, 18 February 1980, p 10.

19 The allusion here is to W.H. Morris-Jones's essay 'India's Political Idioms' and to Myron Weiner's 'India's Two Political Cultures'. Morris-Jones's article was first published in C.H. Phillips (ed.), *Politics and Society in India* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963). A revised version of it is contained in his *The Government and Politics of India* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1964), ch 2. Weiner's article, prepared in 1962, is included in his *Political Change in South Asia* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1963), ch 2.



To an extent, the J P movement of 1974 did succeed in undermining the role of such activists in politics, by bringing young graduates of Bihar's several universities into his movement. If continued for a longer period than it did, the movement could have succeeded in putting its own mark on a far greater number of mavericks who joined the movement at his call. Beyond on attempt to challenge the authority of Mrs Gandhi, the movement was directed to forge the country ahead along a different path. Had it not been snapped so early by the Emergency, the J P movement would have expanded into different parts of the country and branched off into constructive channels, affecting and influencing the various segments of Indian social life and politics. Beyond doubt, it would at the least have somewhat ennobled Indian politics, by preventing young political activists from falling into the morass they have. The opportunity that the movement regained after the 1977 election could not be used, much because of J P's ill-health but partly also because of the factionalism generated by the complacency of a ruling political party, to mobilize its forces for nation-building activities.

**I**n the absence of such a romantic, idealistic movement or ethos, the young mavericks of the universities and colleges get into politics through the youth and student organizations that are tutelage by political parties. The manner in which the students are bred in politics causes disaster both to the university and the polity. The now well-armed toughies of the universities, often protected by politically surcharged vice-chancellors and principals and professors, build their dens first in the hostels on the university and college campuses, overstaying there on one pretext or the other, even beyond their student career. Their over-staying has acquired plausibility in the context of overdelayed examination schedules and academic sessions. Nobody can dare challenge and disturb them. They are the chief source of campus disturbances. Examination dates are most often now determined at their bid. Some of them manage even to get recruited to the faculties of the

universities and colleges. And a good many of them get formally recruited to the profession of politics straight from the campus.

Our Parliament and State assemblies are now growingly studded with such toughies, who have been bred in the stud-farms of the universities and colleges. Having acquired their initial prominence inside the campuses, they can confidently bargain for a party ticket and can mobilize their peer-group to win elections. In the context of the manner in which in our turbulent elections, booths are captured and ballot papers stamped, any political party, anxious to win elections anyhow, would be overwilling to bring them into its fold.

**T**hose who fail to succeed in getting into the legislatures or some other political organizations or fail even to obtain some gainful employment turn out to be the most potent instruments of violence. The new Indian myth of a 'big-bad-government' has made no small contribution in leaving the energies of these young men unutilized. Neither has public policy created adequate employment opportunities for them, nor do they find the way to self-employment. Whatever opportunities are there are controlled by the lazy agencies of the octopus State. The running of a bus or taxi, erecting a shop, or opening a small little factory is all to be processed through government offices, whose functionaries need to be artfully handled with tremendous patience. In artfulness no other generation of people can beat these young men, but patience they certainly do not possess in abundance.

In such a situation, then, they turn to obtaining agency work themselves (supply of petrol, gas, cement, for example) or to obtaining minor contract work, while traditional occupations like carpentry, blacksmithy, masonry await improvement and sophistication at the hands of these better-equipped youngsters. Having tried their luck for employment and failed, they are left with a big question mark on their faces. As the number of such frustrated young people multiply, the society zooms towards disaster and violence shoots up.



# The industrial front

PRAVIN J. PATEL

BY the end of the 1970s there was a remarkable spurt in trade union militancy<sup>1</sup> which cut across all sections of the working class. It engulfed the workers of mines, small engineering units, and those of the docks and ports of the country. If this is the low wage segment of

Indian industry, then the so called 'islands of high wages' also did not remain unaffected. The workers employed in pharmaceuticals, banks, Life Insurance Company, chemicals, metal, machine manufacturing, large engineering, etc., also launched their struggles all over the nation. The strikes of Tata Electric and Locomotive Co. Ltd., Philips India Ltd., Wanson India Ltd., Larsen and

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<sup>1</sup> *Business India*, March 19 to April 1, 1979, pp 26-28



Toubro, Godrej and Boyce, Guest Keen Williams Ltd, Poysha Containers, The Times of India, Bajaj Auto, The J.K. Group of companies, Goodlass Nerolack, Lipton's Tea, Delhi Textile Mills, etc., are just a few instances in point

The most remarkable feature of the 1970s was the mounting symphony of protests, demonstrations and revolts even among those who are employed to maintain law and order such as the Police Force, the State Reserve Police, the Central Reserve Police and the Central Industrial Security Force

Another interesting fact of recent times is that some of these conflicts were converted into long drawn-out struggles.<sup>2</sup> For instance, the strike in Lipton's Tea in Calcutta continued for more than 5 months, the textile workers' strike in Delhi went on for more than 3 months, the Siemens strike in Bombay continued for 10 months and that of Star Glass lasted for 18 long months

Equally prolonged were some of the lock-outs. For example, the Priyalaxmi Mills of Baroda was under lock-out for nearly three years. In Bombay, the Premier Automobiles Limited (PAL), which incidentally is one of the most lock-out-prone factories,<sup>3</sup> locked-out its workers recently for four months. In Calcutta, at the Hindustan Motors, the lock-out lasted for almost three months

Many of these strikes were marred by violence and bloodshed. Last year, a brutal knife attack on 63 year old N P Godrej, the chairman of Godrej and Boyce, Pvt Ltd, created wide-spread feelings of contempt and despair over the issue of violence in the labour movement. Even this year, the All India Organization of Employers have submitted a memorandum<sup>4</sup> to the Central Government

to restrain violence and sabotage frequently resorted to by the workers

However, it must also be noted that many a time the workers and their agitations are brutally suppressed by organized violence initiated by the State or employers. The instances of merciless firings on the workers of Kanpur, Bailadila, Pantnagar, Dalli - Rajhara are quite well known. The legitimate trade union movement of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) almost took the form of a mini-civil-war, when a military brigade of 3600 soldiers was pressed into service to crush their agitation. A night-long battle between the two forces at Bokaro on June 23, 1979 resulted in a massacre of 18 CISF Jawans according to the official sources and 150 according to the unofficial ones.<sup>5</sup> This was perhaps the climax of the turbulent decade which is just over.

Some of the political pundits have attempted to give a psychological explanation of this rise in the working class mood of defiant militancy. According to them, the workers were simply letting off tensions pent up during the Emergency. However, this phenomenal growth in unrest cannot be explained away merely as a post-Emergency reaction to working class repression. If it were so then it should have subsided soon after the catharsis. But it did not. On the contrary, the very fact that many long drawn-out battles were fought out by the workers shows that mass-upsurge has taken a radical stance. It points to some of the deeper roots of the 'unrest'. Besides, the tensions are not of recent origin and they have engulfed all sections of the working class. Therefore, we need to probe the socio-economic causations of this intensified class war

A careful analysis<sup>6</sup> of the trends of industrial conflict reveals that from the mid-60s onwards there is a noticeable increase in the number of strikes and lock-outs which are a reflection of the accelerated class tensions arising out of the serious economic

crisis which has begun in our country around this period. However, this crisis has not affected the Indian bourgeois class as their rates of profits have gone up unabated and their assets, particularly those of the big industrial houses, have increased manifold. But there is a considerable decline in the standard of living of the workers over the last two decades as indicated by the data collected by several official agencies.<sup>7</sup>

The economic crisis thus accentuated the chasm between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. But at the same time it also created a rift within the ruling elites. The 1967 elections unseated the Congress Party from power in many States, initiating thereby a process of its ultimate disintegration. In the 1971 General Elections a rebel group then known as the Congress (R) gave the slogan of 'Garibi Hatao' in order to tide over the existing dissent and the oppositional sentiments among large sections of the people. This gave a new hope to the working class and escalated its aspirations. With this background it is not difficult to understand the militant mood of the workers in the early 1970s which culminated in a strong wave of strikes including those of the railways and other government employees

However, there was a sudden and sharp decline in the figures of strikes and lock-outs in 1975 and 1976, i.e., during the period of the Emergency. This was the beginning of a new phase in the working class movement of the country, which can be called a *period of counter-offensive* launched by the bourgeoisie. The *counter-offensive* of the industrialists is clearly visible in their frequent resort to lock-outs. Hence, from 1976 onwards the loss of man-days due to lock-outs has remarkably increased. Another disturbing feature is that the lock-outs are generally much prolonged. The average time duration of lock-outs has increased from 11 days (1961) to 54 days (1978) whereas the duration of strike has remained generally between 8 to 9 days, barring

2 Radha Iyer, 'Industrial Strife Workers' Paradise Lost', *New Delhi*, Vol 2, Issue 17, December 10, 1979, pp 7-19

3 'In the 30-year history of PAL, it is interesting that while the management has declared lock-outs on four occasions, there has not been even a single strike worth the name' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 14, No 10, March 10, 1979, p 547

4 *Times of India*, Ahmedabad, February 22, 1980, p 1.

5 *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 14, No 23, July 14, 1979

6 Ruddar Datt, 'Lockouts and Labour Unrest', *Mainstream*, Vol 18, No 18, Saturday, December 29, 1979, pp 11-12

7 *Business India*, op cit



1973 and 1974<sup>8</sup> Thus, the lock-outs appear to have become a weapon to punish the workers for their growing consciousness and thereby to teach them a lesson for their 'misbehaviour'

**T**he State was also a party to this onslaught on the working class. It is therefore, not surprising that during the period of the Emergency, the working class lost many gains which it had won through many hard struggles. A policy of wage-freeze was systematically introduced in the guise of reduction/abolition of bonus and imposition of Compulsory Deposit Scheme (CDS). New wage agreements were arbitrarily postponed, and strikes were almost disapproved. And this happened during the period when the government trumpeted about the growth in productivity.

Therefore, immediately after the Emergency was lifted and democratic rights were restored, there was a sudden spurt in the working class movement. Waves of strikes once again swept the country in the first three or four months of the Janata rule which were identical to those of the early seventies. But now the issues of protest were different viz., victimization of workers and wage freeze imposed in various forms during the Emergency period.

The class bias of the Janata party was not much different from the previous regime as revealed by several offensive measures taken by it. For instance, in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana as many as nine strikes were banned. In Madhya Pradesh, when electricity workers gave a strike notice the government immediately promulgated the mini-MISA to suppress them. The instances of police firings against the agitating workers were reported from too many places.

On the question of bonus, though the Janata Party promised in its election manifesto to undo the harm done to the workers by the previous Government, it dragged its feet necessitating all the national federations of trade unions to threaten an all-India stir to restore the minimum bonus. The same story was repeated in the case of CDS. In the public

sector, the Bureau of Public Enterprises almost imposed a virtual wage-freeze. The government also made a determined bid to implement the anti-working class recommendations of the Bhoothalingam committee, presided over by the Chairman of Glaxo Co., a multinational. And to cap all these reactionary measures the Janata Government also introduced an anti-strike Industrial Relations Bill.

What is more alarming is that the police force is more frequently used to repress the workers and then agitations. As a matter of fact, at Faridabad only recently a call for a bandh was given by a joint action committee of all major trade union federations just to protest against frequent impositions of section 144 in the township and the harassment of the workers by police and the goondas hired by managements often in the garb of security staff. The police is now systematically absorbed into the forums concerning industrial relations. For example, in Bombay, the police commissioner has agreed to nominate a police representative on the labour committee of the Indian Merchants Chamber. The Thane Manufacturers' Association is also manned by some former police officers. The Union Home Ministry asked its Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) to go into the happenings at Dhanbad and also appointed a special cell for Dhanbad.<sup>9</sup>

**T**his deepening economic crisis coupled with the pro-bourgeois stance of the ruling elites has considerably eroded the credibility of the State and made the workers more militant and violent. This has led to certain anarchic tendencies in the trade union movement which seems to have thrown the genuine and democratic working class movement into the background, at least temporarily. These tendencies are visible in both inter-class and intra-class conflicts. We would here discuss only two instances, one from Bombay and another from Dhanbad, which may not be representative but are, no doubt, quite instructive.

**D**r Dattatray Narayan Samant<sup>10</sup>, the Bombay-based physician-turned-trade-unionist, is known as a recent hero of Maharashtra workers and demon of their class enemies. In the 1960s he began his career as a socialist trade union leader organizing mine-quarry workers of Ghatkopar who were his own patients.

In the early 1970s he joined Congress (R) attracted by its radicalism and he shot into prominence almost about the same time, as 5000 workers of Godrej and Boyce came under his fold. There was a dissatisfaction in the factory over a series of three agreements which the INTUC leader, Raja Kulkarni, and others had entered into with the management. Therefore the workers invited Dr Samant to take up their leadership. But, the employers refused to recognize his union which sparked the fire. Police was called to repress the agitation. The ensuing clash resulted in police firing, killing one worker and injuring several others. The infuriated workers resorted to throwing stones (the only weapon available to them!) which killed two police personnel. Dr Samant was arrested in this connection, but he was soon exonerated. Before he was acquitted, he became the hero of the working class in Bombay.

Later on he also organized the workers of Aurangabad, Nasik, and Dhule. His critics allege that he could spread his influence very fast due to the support of Congress (R) Government of Maharashtra. But, it should not be forgotten that it was he who opposed his own party when it imposed curbs on bonus during the Emergency. And his image as a fighting doctor was further reinforced by his detention under MISA for one whole year during the Emergency for his stand on bonus. Therefore, when he was released he became more popular among the workers who badly needed his leadership which is evident from the fact that by 1977 Dr Samant had control over more than 250 unions including his Association of Engineering Workers and the Maharashtra General Kamgar Union.

<sup>8</sup> Ruddar Datt, 'Lockouts and Labour Unrest', *op cit*

<sup>9</sup> Radha Iyer, 'Industrial Strife: Workers' Paradise Lost' (a) *op cit* (b) *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 14, No 16, April, 21, 1979, p 719

<sup>10</sup> (a) *Business India*, Feb 27, March 12, 1978, pp 40-41  
(b) *Debonair*, Vol 8, No 4, April 1979, pp 16-20



which claims to have a membership of about two lakhs. Between 25th March and 31st December 1977 he led more than 50 per cent of the total 140 strikes which took place in the Bombay-Thane-Belapur industrial belt.

In that year alone, as per the complaint of employers, more than five units were closed down due to the terror created by Samant. About 14.1 lakh man-days were lost resulting into the loss of production worth Rs 66.54 crores in April-December 1977 in the Bombay-Thane belt due to the 'Samant Wave'. In March 1978 he was leading about 39 strikes in and around Bombay. The management of large industrial establishments, like Zenith Tin, Mukund Iron and Steel, Larsen and Toubro, Emco Transformers, J K Chemicals, Iron Smelting, Siemens Kalwe Works and many others used to shiver in their shoes just by hearing the foot-steps of the fighting doctor near their factories.

**T**he backing of Datta Samant can be easily estimated from the fact that when he was arrested in 1979 in connection with an attack on N.P. Godrej, 25,000 workers marched through south Bombay in protest against his arrest.

Datta Samant was able to attract workers due to his simple tactics and uncompromising attitude. Once he launches a struggle he fights unto the finish. He shared the workers' skepticism about the impotency of the legal-judicial machinery. Therefore he could easily out-manoeuvre the old style trade union leadership whose trained incapacity to go beyond the legal framework had eroded its credibility. The workers saw in Samant a leader who unfailingly responded to their urges and aspirations. To them he was the only leader who could deliver the goods without much delay.

His demands are also quite simple. He just asks for lump sum payments in hard cash. He does not enter into long drawn out and irritating negotiations. He refuses to be guided by the balance sheets of the employers.

This does not mean that the Samant method is the final answer

to working class problems. His method is good for immediate gains but does not lead to a solid and organized support for long term objectives. As a matter of fact his unions are centered around him and have a very precarious organizational base. He does not have explicitly stated long term goals of his activities. He leads the struggles on ad hoc, arbitrarily decided short term goals which is symptomatic of a leader who is by and large oblivious of working class mobilization for bringing radical transformation in the social order. Therefore it is feared that he would not succeed much in creating a strong working class movement. The workers would come to him for their immediate problems and after they are solved perhaps he would not be able to retain their loyalty over a long period. The recent reports indicate that his influence is now receding. Another danger of this kind of movement is that it can also take the turn of intra-class conflict due to trade union rivalry as it happened in the case of PAL.

**I**n the Dhanbad coalfields, clashes over money-lending, gambling, liquor trade, pilferage of coal, illegal mining, etc., are so common that some observers are persuaded to believe that violence has become a common faith in the town.<sup>11</sup>

If we examine the facts, this belief does not appear to be exaggerated. For example, by March 1979 nearly 70 trade union leaders are believed to have died in a series of killings. If we include killings of their followers and other workers, then the total number of those who are killed in this series may be around 400.<sup>12</sup>

Perturbed by these happenings, the Home Ministry entrusted the Police Research and Development Bureau to investigate into this series of 'political' murders in Bharat Coking Coal Ltd (BCCCL) complex and around.<sup>13</sup> According to the Bureau's

report there are four or five gangs of so-called trade union leaders who are responsible for these infights. These gangs have carved out their areas of jurisdiction. Their leaders with the help of their musclemen extract about Rs 10 crores from the workers every month in the form of subscription or protection money. One of the issues of the infights among these gangs is that every gang is trying to extend its influence which is fiercely resisted by every other gang.

These leaders according to the Bureau's report are believed to have amassed huge wealth, not only through the collection of subscription but also, through transport contracts, illegal mining, money-lending, etc., without any fear of the law.

It would be incorrect to assume that only the so-called trade union leaders are responsible for this. The fact of the matter is that there is a close link between these leaders and the politicians on the one hand, and the officers of the BCCCL on the other.<sup>14</sup>

**T**his does not mean that there is no genuine trade union movement in the coal fields of Dhanbad. In fact, the Bihar Colliery Kamgar Union (BCKU) led by a Marxist, A K. Roy, who was recently elected as the M.P. from Dhanbad, has launched many struggles in these collieries. This union according to all available reports, seems to have a bright image among the workers. It is a militant organisation and its cadre as well as leadership are a nightmare for the BCCCL management. It has doggedly refused to be a party to the loot of colliery workers by the management-contractor-union nexus. But, it seems precisely for these reasons that it has become a target of attack by this nexus, which also presumably enjoys the support of the government. For instance when last year BCKU launched a struggle over an issue of compensating the peasants whose lands have been acquired by the colliers it was sought to be suppressed.

11 *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol No 14, October 13, 1979, pp 17

12 Arun Srivastava, 'Trade Union Murders in Dhanbad', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 14, No 10, March 10, 1979, pp 550

13 *Link*, Oct 7, 1978, p 21

14 Hiranmay Dhar, 'Gangsters and Politicians in Dhanbad', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 14, No 15, April, 1979, pp 690-691



sed by the colliery management and the government by unleashing violence against it<sup>15</sup> In this instance Rasik Hansda, an adivasi worker of Godhar colliery and the local secretary of B C K U was killed by the police which created a great upsurge in the town

What is more surprising is the fact that government transfers those officers who launch an offensive against the gangsters For instance, K D Sinha, the Deputy Commissioner of Dhanbad was transferred within six months of resuming his duties because he was firm and effective in dealing with these contractor gangs

The officers of the B C C L are also often found complaining against A K. Roy and his agitating union, B C K U But they do not utter a word against the Janata Mazdoor Sangh or other such spurious unions Because these unions are not anti-management, they do not bother much to take up the workers' grievances Nor do they organize or participate in strikes On the contrary, they are used by the management to break up strikes Above all, they never fail to reciprocate the favours of their friends in the B C C L bureaucracy

This clearly show that the B C C L management, transport contractors and their unions have become allies and they enjoy the support of the ruling politicians Thus, the working class is divided and misled into an intra-class conflict, which is the order of the day in Dhanbad As a result, it is the workers who have become the victims of this unfortunate situation<sup>16</sup> For example, the coal miners are the highest paid workers with minimum working hours everywhere except in India Here the coal miners are even denied certain basic rights, viz, casual leave, canteen facilities, subsidized food, medical care, etc Only less than 20 per cent of coal miners are provided quarters, that too without water and electricity facilities

<sup>15</sup> *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 14, No 33, August 18, 1979, pp 1411-12

<sup>16</sup> Kalyan Roy, 'Discrimination, Exploitation in Coal Mines', *Mainstream* Vol 17, No 38, May 19, 1979, pp 6-8

In case of accident, ambulances are not available to take them to the hospital. The number of accidents and cases of gassification and suffocation are increasing Since 1975 there is no increase in their wages while during this period 2000 workers have been killed in accidents and more than 7000 workers have been seriously injured, making them permanently unfit for work<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the above referred disturbing tendencies, the future of the working class movement in the country is not bleak One of the healthy developments of recent times is that the trade union federations of different shades and colours are coming closer to each other In the cities we often find coordination or joint action committees which take a united stand on certain local issues as evidenced in the Delhi Textile strike<sup>17</sup> It is also heartening to note that the unity is emerging at still higher level as indicated by the common stand taken by these federation of trade unions on many issues like bonus, CDS, Bureau of Public Enterprises, Bhoothalingam Committee, Industrial Relations Bill, etc

Still another emerging phenomenon relevant to the working class movement is the 'modern worker', a new sociological entity With the growth of modern large scale engineering, chemical and pharmaceutical industries in India, which have installed very modern machinery, often with international collaboration, the character and composition of the working class is also changing. The 'modern worker' is remarkably different from the 'traditional worker' of jute and cotton textile mills, railways or coal mines This worker tends to be a second or third generation worker and he is more cosmopolitan, better educated, highly conscious and even aggressive in his attitudes And perhaps it is due to the influence of this type of worker that the above referred unity among different federations is being forged It is this worker who would be militant but not necessarily violent because he is aware of the dysfunctions of violence.

<sup>17</sup> Mahendra Sharma, 'Long Fight for Bare Justice' *Mainstream* Vol 18, No 8, Saturday, October 20, 1979, pp. 4-6



# Caste collisions

ANJAN GHOSH

*'They are punyapatis (capitalists) They don't want to see the harijans rise' — Kushdhar Ram (a dalit) of Bishrampur*

IN an earlier essay in the pages of this journal, I have written about what it means to be a *dalit* (scheduled caste)<sup>1</sup> This time I intend to focus on the nature and practise of power

'Atrocities against Harijans' is an official euphemism for assaults on the *dalits*. Such attacks have escalated in recent years as the table (next page) indicates

The currently accepted explanation for such incidents of caste violence is that these express structural inequalities of class. In other words, though

the form is caste conflict the content indicates class exploitation<sup>2</sup> But this partly begs the question. If it is class conflict then why does it require caste overtones? Also class conflict presumably is present all over India. Not everywhere is it being articulated in caste wars? Within the limited scope of this essay I propose to discuss these issues and suggest a viewpoint, not provide an explanation

Who is violent against whom? It is significant to note that the perpet-

2 cf Arun Sinha 'Class War not "Atrocities" against Harijans', *Economic and Political Weekly* (EPW) December 10, 1977 and 'Advancing class interests in the name of caste', *EPW* April 22, 1978. I have also been a party to such interpretations, see my 'Caste Idiom for Class Conflict', *EPW*, February 3-10, 1979

1 Anjan Ghosh 'The Seventh Indian', *Seminar*-243, November, 1979



Table 1

Incidence of Assaults on the Scheduled Castes						
1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	
6186	8860	7781	5678	8872	560	(first two months)

Source *Six Parliaments and Democratic Rights*, People's Union for Civil Liberties and Democratic Rights, New Delhi, December, 1979

rators of violence are the locally dominant peasant castes who own or control substantial amounts of land in these areas. Caste violence is characteristic of those areas where peasant castes have themselves followed a 'mobility course' which includes violence. Thus in Belchi it was the Kurmis, in Pathada the Yadavs, in Bishrampur again Kurmis, in Mandi the Gujjars, in Khanjawala the Jats, in Marathwada the Marathas, in Parasbigha the Bhumihars and in Pipra the Kurmis. These are the castes who have improved and consolidated their position from tenant farmers to rich peasants owning their own farms. This achievement has come in the course of a long struggle spanning about 50 years directed against the traditionally high caste landed oligarchy (Brahmins, Rajputs Bhumihars) as in UP and Bihar.

For the dominant peasant castes, this has not been an easy victory. Since the 1920s the tenant farmers have sought to overthrow the local authority of the landlords through violent confrontations, caste reform movements and political mobilisations. As a response to social and economic tyranny of the caste landowners who over and above the legal rent demanded 'abwabs' (extra-legal cesses), 'nazrana' (tribute for renewal of tenancy), 'begar' (forced labour) and various other economic and non-economic privileges (like access to lower caste women) from their lower caste tenants in North India, the latter resisted, sometimes violent-

ly. In Bihar, the caste mobility movements of the Ahirs and Kurmis were the social representation of economic grievances. Behind the donning of the sacred thread by the Ahirs was the intention of claiming higher caste status and thus preventing the imposition of customary, extra-legal dues upon them.<sup>3</sup>

Alongside mobility, the identity of caste changed. As a response to socio-economic discrimination, caste 'substantialization' took place.<sup>4</sup> Substantialization was essentially the process by which jati segments with similar occupational and ritual status united and identified themselves as a jati or caste group. This horizontal extension of localised caste segments and the formation of 'caste blocs' comprising different 'jatis' Ahirs, Kurmis and Koeris as in the case of the Triveni Sangh in Bihar were elementary forms of class organization.<sup>5</sup> Even the Kisan Sabhas in UP, Bihar and Bengal represented the tenant castes' interest against landlords. Colonialism thus created the material base for class formation but having arrested the organic growth of the colonial economy could not change the nature of interest articulation. Caste associations flourished, caste identities were asserted.

The dominant peasant castes having adopted this 'mobility course' to establish their position in the countryside, distinguished themselves from two other strata of rural society. Firstly, from the high caste landed gentry who had rarely participated actively in the production

process in agriculture and were generally the absentee, rent-receiving class. The predominant tendency among them had been to shift from land to the urban professions. They were the ones who crowded into the schools for English education in an effort to secure positions in the colonial bureaucracy or professions. Their declining interest in land diluted their conflict with the class of agricultural labourers mostly from the ranks of the *dalits*.

The landlords had, however, strongly resisted the 'mobility course' of the dominant peasant castes as it was an affront to their local power and authority. But between 1920 and 1955 they fought a losing battle. A part of the reason for their inability to resist the peasant castes was because of their dissociation from actual production. Unfamiliar with the mechanics of cultivation and unable to maximize production from land, this 'leisured class' took refuge in the 'safe' sanctuaries of the colonial State.

For the *dalits* there were fewer options of mobility available. Some found entry into the army or industry and were able to move out of their localised powerlessness to the urban social sphere of relatively greater opportunity.<sup>6</sup> But these were the exceptions rather than the rule. More often they remained confined in their rural 'tolas' segregated and socially and economically oppressed by the landed gentry who exacted labour power from them through the customary coercive obligations of 'jati dharma'. For the *dalits* the caste system (*jati-vyavastha*) was a coercive instrument of surplus extraction.

The system survived on the labour of the *dalits* but ranked them lowest in the hierarchy. Pollution was an expedient form of excluding them from owning the means of production — land. In actuality it transformed the *dalits* into instruments of reproduction objectified as agrestic

3 Hetukar Jha 'Lower' Caste peasants and upper caste Zamindars in Bihar 1921-25', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* XIV 1977 4 549-60, W F Gawley 'Kisan Sabhas and Agrarian Revolt in United Provinces 1920-21', *Modern Asian Studies* V 2 95-109, D N Dhana-gare *Agrarian Movements and Gandhian Politics*, Institute of Social Sciences, Agra University 1975

4 Steve Barnett 'Identity Choice and Caste Ideology in Contemporary South India,' K David (ed) *The New Wind Changing Identities in South Asia*, The Hague, Mouton, 1977

5 Jha, *op cit*, G Mishra and B Pandey 'Socio-economic roots of Casteism in Bihar,' in N L Gupta (ed). *Transition from Capitalism and other essays*, Kalamkar, New Delhi, 1974

6 Stephen Cohen 'The Untouchable Soldier', *Journal of Asian Studies* 1969 28 453-68; Owne Lynch *Politics of Untouchability*, Columbia University, 1968



serfs or bonded labourers, overlasteringly attached to a particular landowner. Even when formally free, the caste system bound them into systems of 'reciprocity' within the village. They had to serve the landowners and the latter only had to allow them to serve. Caste ideology was a coercive instrument of generating 'consent'.<sup>7</sup>

This security of service to landowners in the village has been jeopardised with the breakdown of traditional obligations. For, the new landowners, unlike the old, are not willing to honour customary services.

Unlike the landed aristocracy, the 'new landowners' from locally dominant peasant castes are those who have and often still hold the plough. Their direct involvement in the process of cultivation enables them to enforce stricter work norms on the agricultural labourer so as to extract more surplus. But this means that absolute surplus is expropriated by, for instance, extending the hours of work.<sup>8</sup> This is legitimized through a stress on the 'natural inferiority' of the *dalits* embodied in the ideology of caste.

Further, this is at times violently demonstrated so as to keep the *dalits* in their proper place! This is necessitated (from the point of view of the dominant peasants) because the social distance between the dominant peasant castes and the *dalits* is less than with the earlier high caste landlords. Also, since these peasant castes have themselves followed a path of violent assertion, it might generate an emulative trend among the '*dalit*' castes. In the face of increasing economic marginalization this is what is happening among the '*dalits*'. Thus in Bihar the Dusadhs, Musahars, Chamars and Paswans are uniting faced with insecurity of employment and low wages. But not having a class model of mobilization within the purview of their experience, they have to take recourse to

caste mobilization. Again, a horizontal extension of caste solidarity occurs. This is the basis, but does not necessarily signify the presence of class action. The latter requires conscious political intervention and organisation, which is singularly absent in most cases.<sup>9</sup>

The present phase of caste violence which we are witnessing since Belchi in 1977 till Pipra in March 1979 will perhaps continue, for it signifies the breakdown of a 'consensus' evolved over centuries. This had already occurred between the higher castes and backward castes. Today it is happening between the 'backward' castes and the '*dalits*'. Its mitigation can hardly be possible until the power structure is changed. Yet, in the process the nature of coercion or violence has changed. What had been latent in pre-British times within the ideology of caste became more explicit within the colonial social formation. The naked use of force since Kilvenmani (1973) and Belchi (1977) to the most recent massacre at Pipra only goes to emphasize the slender legitimacy which the dominant peasants enjoy over the *dalits*.

Influential schools of social thought believe that violence stems from frustration owing to the thwarting of goal achievement.<sup>10</sup> This would seemingly shift the onus of violent behaviour upon those who are the least powerful. Yet in practice, probably the most important source of violence is the State which attempts to maintain the rule of the propertied classes. At the local level too it is those who exercise power who seek to maintain it even with violence. Consequently, the *dalits* have mainly been the victims so far. They have not been the aggressors. If the retaliation of the Yadavs and Gaderias (backward castes) of Parasbigha against the Bhumihars of Dohiya is any indication, then force will remain the midwife of history. Today the 'backwards' are able to retaliate, tomorrow, will the *dalits* be far behind?

7 The concept of 'consent' is used here in the sense that A. Gramsci uses it in his *Prison Notebooks*, International Publishers, New York, 1971 p. 257-259.

8 A. Sinha 'The Bishrampur Carnage', *EPW* April 1, 1978.

9 Except in such places like Bhojpur and Chhaundadano. See A. Sinha 'Class War in Bhojpur', *EPW* January 7 and 21, 1978, and 'Murder of a Peasant Leader', *EPW* July 30, 1977.

10 T. R. Gurr *Why Men Rebel*, Princeton, 1970.



# Reservations

SACHCHIDANANDA

THE issue of reservation of posts in government services and seats in admission to educational institutions for backward castes in Bihar raised a storm of controversy early in 1978 and continued through the year. In some quarters it was hailed as a measure of social justice and aimed at promoting egalitarianism. Its opponents, however, decried it on the ground that it perpetuated caste sentiments and cuts at the root of social integration. In any case, the issue divided people on caste lines. Since reservations in posts and admissions in educational institutions concerned youth and students, it is they who were agitated and split very sharply. With large scale unemployment in all communities the tension and frustration created by such a decision in an economically backward State with the government as the major employer is quite understandable.

Arguments and counter arguments in favour of and against reservations were advanced by leaders of both the camps. It was argued that preference in appointment contributes to national development by providing incentive, opportunities and resources to utilise neglected talent. It helps compensate for and offset accumulated disabilities resulting from centuries of deprivation. It also induced in others awareness that the beneficiary groups are participants in Indian life whose interests and views have to be taken into account. By broadening opportunities, compensatory discrimination stimulates acquisition of skills and resources needed to compete successfully in open competition. By reducing the gaps among groups,

preferences promote the development of secularism.

Opponents of reservation controverted these arguments by pointing out that preferences would impede development by misallocation of resources, lowering of morale and incentive and waste of talent. They place a handicap on other individuals who are deprived of opportunities they deserved on merit. By stressing the identity of communities enjoying reservations, discrimination reduces opportunities of common participation. In some cases it aggravates dependency of castes enjoying these privileges. It undermines their sense of dignity, pride and personal efficacy. By perpetuating individual distinctions, preferences cut at the root of secularism. Reservations, in fact, create vested interest in their continuation while discouraging the development of skills, resources and attitudes that would enable the beneficiaries to prosper without special treatment. It is further argued that reservations cannot remain a temporary measure. Experience has shown that once it is provided it may not be possible to do away with it in the democratic process.

Even before the Bihar government announced its decision on the controversial question, Jayaprakash Narayan and the Janata Party chief, Chandrashekhar, had declared themselves to be in favour of economic criteria to judge man's backwardness. The Janata legislature party and even the State Cabinet were sharply divided over the issue. The decision was postponed for some time and a reference was made to the Janata Parliamentary Board



However, keeping in view the Janata Party promise in the election manifesto and the persistent pressure from the backward caste lobby, the then Chief Minister, Karpoori Thakur, made up his mind to go in for backward caste reservations

**E**arly in March 1978, there was a demonstration before the gates of the Secretariat demanding immediate declaration of the government's intention in this regard. At a meeting organized for the purpose, intemperate remarks were made against Jayaprakash Narayan. In order to mount pressure on the government, two hundred members of the Backward Caste Federation offered satyagrah and were arrested. On the 12th March there was a disturbance at a large public meeting in the Gandhi Maidan, Patna, to present the Amrit Kosh to Jayaprakash Narayan. This and the burning of J.P.'s books created an explosive situation. Large processions organised for and against reservations were taken out by different youth organizations.

To counteract the backward caste lobby, a Forward League was formed with many fiery young Janata Legislators in it. In collaboration with Pragatishil Yuva Morcha and Rashtriya Krantikari Morcha the league took out a huge procession in Patna. The disturbances that followed led to the closure of all the universities of Bihar. In many parts of the State, train services came to a halt as a large number of students blocked the railway tracks and snapped the hose pipes of several trains. Demonstrators forced the closure of government offices. In Chapra, Gaya, Muzaffarpur, Dharbhanga, Bihar-sharif and other places large scale disturbances were reported. In Muzaffarpur a twelve-year old backward caste boy was shot at by an upper caste boy. Two government jeeps and a State bus were hijacked by students. There was a free-for-all between members of the two caste groups at Sindri in which eighteen persons were injured.

In the days that followed, complete lawlessness gripped Bihar. Railway stations were stoned by processionists and train services between Patna and Mokamah were suspended. An attempt was made to paralyse life and communications by stopping

trains, deflating and burning buses, etc. Processions led by both the groups continued to be taken out.

**O**n the 21st March, the Bihar Government adopted reservations with modifications. It provided reservations only in appointments and not in promotion. Reservations would not be taken advantage of by families whose income was Rs 1000 a month or more. But these modifications failed to satisfy the warring groups. The backward castes were angry at the concessions being made, while these did not satisfy the forward castes, who wanted the entire decision scrapped. Conflicts and violence continued to rage all over the State as before. Deeply disturbed by these developments, J.P. issued an appeal for peace and sanity which was essential for finding a solution to the problem. He also advised people to abandon the plan of large scale demonstration on the 31st March.

Despite this appeal, a big rally was held in Patna in which pro-reservation processionists engaged in a ding dong battle with the police for several hours. In the lathi charge that followed one hundred persons were injured. In the disturbances at Aurangabad three persons were killed and six injured. In many places in North Bihar, train movements were obstructed. In Muzaffarpur, the L.S. College office was set on fire. The Shuja Post Office at Bhagalpur was looted and an attempt was made to set fire to the Public Relations Department jeep there. An unruly mob disturbed the university examination in Bhagalpur colleges and forced the girl examinees to leave the examination hall.

At about this time the agitation spread to villages. In Pirpainti in Bhagalpur district school boys demanded the closure of government offices and damaged furniture. In Saharsa, which is dominated by certain aggressive backward castes, Rajput and Brahmin passengers were dragged down from a bus and beaten up.

In Patna the University office was forcibly closed. An attempt was made to set fire to furniture in B.N. College. When the police arrived, there

was a battle between the police and the students. At some places in north Bihar fish plates were removed from the railway tracks and railway sleepers stacked at Bachhwara were set fire to. State transport buses were attacked at several places.

**T**o contain the agitation and prevent the concentration of youth at educational centres, the universities in Bihar were ordered to be closed till April 23. The examinations were put off. In the Bihar College of Engineering Hostel at Patna the pro-reservationist group of students attacked two high caste hostelers and looted their property. One result of the closure of colleges, however, was that the agitators fanned out in the interior and disturbances instead of being contained, spread all over. Railway stations, railway tracks, Rajya Transport buses, postal buildings, telephone installations were special targets for the demonstrators.

When some of the universities reopened on the 23rd April, the situation was still dangerous. On the same day, high power bombs exploded in the Muzaffarpur Electricity Board Office, fish plates were removed from the railway track, telegraph lines snapped and a bomb was hurled in Mithila College. An attempt was also made to damage the Marwari College building in Darbhanga. The disturbances continued unabated for the whole of April. Miscreants tried to set fire to college buildings. Three bombs exploded and furniture was burnt in Saharsa College. A high caste student was also stabbed to death by pro-reservationists at Saharsa. The agitation, however, abated in May although a few clashes and disturbances continued to be reported from some places. Early in June the government announced the setting up of a high level panel for the implementation of the reservation scheme.

However, the agitation and the disturbances again gripped the State from early November when the Chief Minister announced the revised reservation formula which, according to the Janata Party chief, Chandra-shekhar, was the 'best in the circumstances'. The Chief Minister and the Janata Party wanted to capitalise on the reservation issue to gain votes for



the party in the ensuing parliamentary by-election in Samastipur. In fact, the election was fought and won on this basis. The same pattern of disruption as six months earlier was adopted by the anti-reservationists at this time. Great tension prevailed at the Muzaffarpur Institute of Technology where there was a clash between the two groups as a result of which the institution was closed for ten days. Tension was mounting all round. The Backward Class Federation sent an ultimatum to the Chief Minister to issue notification for the reservation. The Cabinet approved the job reservations and orders were issued. The anti-reservationists were asked to withdraw the agitation. The disturbances, however, continued as before.

In the middle of November the Union Government decided to set up a panel on backward classes with B.P. Mandal as its Chairman to determine the criteria of backwardness. Since, however, implementation of the reservation formula had already begun, the anti-reservationists continued their agitation in full swing. There were a series of processions and *bunds* in the major towns of Bihar. Free fighting between students belonging to different groups was the order of the day. Government property and educational institutions were attacked by rowdies. Pro and anti reservationists clashed at the Industrial Training Institute at Motihari. Several State transport buses and offices were set on fire. Some of the pro-reservation leaders urged the people to intensify agitation.

When the colleges reopened after prolonged closure in November, police had to open four rounds of fire to disperse a mob at the Arrah railway station which was bent on damaging railway property. Train connections on several routes were disturbed. A number of trains were cancelled for fear of sabotage. The North-Eastern Railway alone suffered a loss of Rs. 3 crores on account of the disturbances. There were fifty-two cases of arson and destruction of railway property in that zone. The Goonda Act was invoked to deal with the anti-social elements. But in spite of these measures, the disturbances mounted. There was a fierce battle between two groups of stud-

ents in Jamui College. In Rohtas Mahila College the building was set on fire. Clashes again occurred between two groups at Motihari, Sitamarhi and Jamui. Sabotage of one of the trains in North Bihar by anti-reservationists was also reported.

However, by the end of December, 1978, the agitation virtually died down. Evidently the violent protest of the anti-reservationists had failed. Their leaders tried to console themselves with the hope that the backward classes panel might look at the issue dispassionately and find a solution to the problem.

This case study of conflict and violence in Bihar on the issue of backward caste reservations throws into sharp focus the hidden springs of social pathology. One group felt that the other was denying to it its legitimate share of employment opportunities which it claimed by merit. Its youth saw their entire future blasted and their hopes frustrated. The other camp was crying out in the name of social justice and believed it to be the only way of overcoming social backwardness and coming on par with the advanced sections of the community.

There was some justification for both the points of view. The leaders, however, on both sides took extreme stands and urged their followers to take to the path of protest agitation and even violence. The worst animal passions were roused. At this stage, as usual, the anti-social elements joined from both sides. The government treated this as a law and order issue. Not only the government but the bureaucracy at all levels was split on the issue and took sides as and when the opportunities were favourable. Attempts at repression produced more loud protests which ultimately led to an escalation of violence and its spread over a larger area. Voices of peace and conciliation were drowned since passions whipped up by rabble rousers had blinded the youth for the time being. However, no agitation can continue for a long time and ultimately wiser counsels prevail and passions die down. The same happened with this case of conflict and violence although the issues raised still call for a satisfactory solution.



# The north-east

B N AGARWAL

THE north-east, the land of 'seven sisters', comprising the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura and the Union Territories of Arunachal and Mizoram linked with a narrow strip of territory near Siliguri in West Bengal with the rest of the country, is in great ferment. The region, although very sensitive and of strategic importance had remained peaceful following its reorganisation in 1971 and the signing of the Shillong Accord in 1975 with the underground Nagas and the similar accord with the Mizo hostiles in June 1976.

There has been marked discontent in the region after the State Assemblies' elections in 1978. It was followed by the decline of the influence of all-India parties in the region and the spurt of regional parties in the different units of the north-east. Starting with a serious inter-State border dispute on the Nagaland-Assam border where heavy loss and damage to the lives and properties of the people living on the border of the State of Assam was committed allegedly by the disguised para military forces of Nagaland in order to establish the claims over the territories claimed



by the Nagas. The region soon witnessed inter-State border clashes on Arunachal-Assam and Meghalaya-Assam borders.

**N**o sooner had the matter subsided then the region witnessed the worst violent incidents leading to the revival of insurgency by the Laldenga-led M N F faction in June 1979. Earlier, the M.N.F. had given a call for the boycott of the Territorial Council elections in Mizoram and had served notice on the non-Mizos to leave Mizoram by a specified date. The anti-non-Mizo stir in Mizoram set the new pattern of political turmoil in the north-eastern region. The announcement of the decision to hold mid-term elections to the Lok Sabha has hastened the wide-spread political turmoil in the States of Assam, Meghalaya and, to some extent, in the valley of Manipur. These areas in the north-east have been seriously affected by the new developments in the region.

In the State of Tripura, the tribal militancy spearheaded by the Tripura Upjatiya Sabha, a local regional party, and the Amara Bengalee movement by the political wing of the Anand Marg, had resulted in several violent clashes between the two on the question of the constitution of the District Councils in the State. The tribals in the State, ever since independence, have been deprived of their land and driven into the interior of the jungle by the Bengali refugees from East Pakistan. The CPM has considerable hold over the tribals of the State. They form the nucleus for the establishment of the CPM-led Left Front government in the State. The CPM is committed to solve the tribal problem in Tripura and on its success it hopes to increase its influence among the tribals of the north-east.

Arunachal is the only unit in the north-east which has remained unaffected so far by the events taking place in other parts of the region. But it also suffered border clashes with neighbouring Assam and its adoption of the Freedom of Religion Bill in 1978 had widespread repercussions among the Christian tribal

dominated States/Territory in the north-east.

In the State of Assam, following the formation of the two regional parties, viz., Assam Jatiyata Vadi Dal under the leadership of Sri Nogen Hazarika and the Purvanchaliya Lok-Parishad with Nabaran Bora of the Lohia Socialist group as its chairman, the drive against the foreign nationals and outsiders in the region gathered momentum. Student delegations were sent to the different units of the region to organise and co-ordinate joint action committees for the removal of their names from the voter's list and their speedy deportation from the region. The movement against the enumeration of their names in the voter's list, the deletion of their names from the electoral roll and their summary deportation led to the widespread satyagraha, hartal, bundh and mass dharna in the State of Assam which not only disturbed the normal activities in the State but also led to the closure of oil refineries there. It has seriously disturbed the national economy and paralysed the local administration in the State.

**T**he north-east is very heterogeneous. There is little emotional integration among the people inhabiting the region. The whole region is divided between the hills and the plains. In the hills, tribes of Mongoloid origin reside. Their number is over 108. They are further divided and sub-divided into numerous clans and subclans. Inter-tribal warfare and intra-tribal feuds are very common among them. Each group of tribes has its own language, tradition and political-economical set-up. V V. Rao maintains that 'there is very little common among the tribes and sub-tribes except their wildness and profound distrust and antipathy towards outsiders'.<sup>1</sup>

The tribal areas in the north-east are situated on the international borders. Ethnologically, culturally, and linguistically, the Nagas and the Mizos have a common affinity with their counterparts on the other side of the international border. The Nagas and the Mizos have contact

with their fellowmen in Burma and a section of them intends to form a separate State in the area. Christianity has spread all over the hill areas. Most of the tribes have been baptised and unified by a common language and a common Roman script by Christian missionaries. Christianity is striving to bring the entire tribal population in the area within its fold. But the conditions in Tripura and Arunachal are not favourable to them as elsewhere in the hills of the north-east.

**T**he north-east is inhabited by three distinct groups of people, viz., the hill tribes, the plain tribes and the plainsmen. The three groups are very heterogeneous. Socially, culturally, religiously, and linguistically, the plains people also differ considerably. Rao rightly states, 'the races inhabiting the hill areas in the North-East India are the most picturesque in the whole world. Nowhere in the world is the contrast between the life and outlook of hill people and the totally different civilization of the plains more manifest than in the North-East'.<sup>2</sup>

In the pre-reorganisation days, the insurgent activities in the north-east were largely confined to the Naga Hills, the Mizo Hills and sporadic violent incidents in the valley of Manipur. The political development in the Naga Hills had influenced the movement for separate statehood in the hill areas of Assam and also in Manipur and Tripura. In granting statehood to the different hill areas of Assam, the principle of maintaining distinct tribal identity was upheld and the Centre committed itself to provide special treatment to the non-viable tiny States of the region.

In the post-reorganisation period, two events of far reaching importance took place which considerably influenced the turn of events in the hills of the region after the 1977 Lok-Sabha elections. The first was the merger of the ruling regional parties, viz., the N N O in Nagaland, the A P H L C of Meghalaya and the Mizo Union in Mizoram with the India National Congress. The unified rule of the Indian National

<sup>1</sup> V V Rao, *A Century of Tribal Politics in North-East India*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.



Congress was thus established in the region. This accentuated developmental activities in the north-east. The employment policy was liberalised to attract experts and talents to work for the speedy economic development of the region. The second was the setting up of the NFEPSCO by the North Eastern Council for the development of the power requirements of the region. The twin events were later exploited by various regional parties as a danger to tribal identity and also an infringement of the State's rights. The U.D.F. opposition in Nagaland branded the merger of the N.N.O. with the Indian National Congress as an 'Indianisation of Nagaland'. A section of the APHLC had successfully won its case against the merger in the Supreme Court and thus retained its separate identity in the State of Meghalaya.

The Indian National Congress lost its hold over the region after the 1978 Assembly elections. In Tripura, the CPM-led Left Front came into power. The U.D.F. in Nagaland, the People's Conference in Mizoram, and a combination of the regional parties came into power in Meghalaya. An attempt by the Janata Party to open its units in these areas was disliked by the new regional forces. The UDF and the APHLC had advised against it. Instead they themselves claimed to be 'regional parties with national outlook,' and the U.D.F. Naga representatives in the Indian Parliament even joined the parliamentary group of the Janata Party at the Centre.

Soon after the Lok Sabha elections, the tribal hill leaders felt the necessity of providing a common forum or organisation to the various regional hill parties in the north-east. The hill leaders made them aware of the dangers the Hill tribal communities were going to face. The fear was expressed 'In a few years, within a few decades, perhaps, our hill people are going to be swamped and submerged. At the same time the autonomy and the freedom we have achieved under the Constitution of India is sought to be taken away by the Centre through its party organisation'.<sup>3</sup> The Hill leaders expressed

the view that the centralised party system and the High Command pattern which take over and centralise all powers and functions in Delhi is contrary to the letter and spirit of the federal constitution.<sup>4</sup> The forum of the hill parties met twice, first in Shillong and then at Kohima. It is believed that a federation of hill parties was attempted in these meetings but the same was denied by the organisers of the forum. In the Kohima meeting the presence of the representatives of Arunachal and Tripura was acclaimed by a clapping of hands.

In the assembly elections in Meghalaya, the issue of full autonomy was given prominence. It was claimed that the tribal autonomy of running their own affairs in the State could best be guaranteed by regional parties of their own choice. The tribals of Meghalaya felt, for the first time, the new thrust of 'Dakhara,' the outlanders, when there was a sudden mushroom like appearance of non-tribal candidates in the State assembly elections. Of the seven non-tribals who won the elections, three belonged to Shillong alone. Two of them were Bengalis and the third was a Nepalee. All the three belonged to the Congress. This provoked the tribals and made them apprehensive of the political ambition of the outlanders. This election revealed the worsening demographic situation in the hills of north-eastern India and confirmed their worst fear that they were going to be swamped like the indigenous tribals of Tripura and the Lepcha Bhutias of Sikkim.

This fear is central to all current political activity in the region resulting in violence on one plea or another. 'It widened and deepened the chasm between the tribal people and the outlander plainmen in the State of Meghalaya'.<sup>5</sup> Earlier, the demand for revival of the Meghalaya Residential Permit Bill 1973, was made both inside and outside the legislature. Tribal sentiments were exploited against the non-tribals living in Shillong, most of them were the

employees of the central undertakings. Public representation for providing preference to tribals in employment to the central offices and institutions on an agreed percentage became a new phenomenon. The feelings of the tribals in Shillong on the issue were aroused and even threats were issued that the unemployed tribal youths would take the agitation to the streets.<sup>6</sup>

Christian tribals in the region were also alarmed by the emergence of the CPM-led Left Front government in Tripura and its increased strength in the legislature of the State of Assam. The rise of the neo-individualism among the tribals, rampant corruption in administration and presence of a large number of Chinese-trained insurgents in the underground made them feel uneasy. The desire of the non-Christian tribals to maintain their indigenous faith and their continued neglect in the Christian-dominated States/Territory made Christian missionaries apprehensive of their joining hands with the communists. In this situation, Christian missionaries became very sore and resented vehemently the stand of the Janata government on the issues of the Freedom of Religion Bill, anti-cow slaughter legislation, prohibition and compulsory knowledge of one of the Indian languages of the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution for the central service examinations. They foresaw in these measures the danger of domination of the majority section of the Indian community as imminent. The youth front was mobilised to arouse public passion against these measures.

In Manipur, from the very beginning, the Centre has taken the Vaishnavite Maetie Hindus of the valley for granted. On the other hand, it adopted a policy to favour and pamper the hill tribes to the utter disadvantage of the former. The authorities in Imphal and New Delhi have shown great disregard for the aspirations and problems of the Maetie Manipurians who constitute the majority in the State. The Manipurians of the valley have deep regard for their rich culture and the Manipuri language.

<sup>3</sup> *Planter* (Weekly, Shillong), Vol IX No 81, October 28, 1977

<sup>5</sup> *Resistance* (Weekly, Imphal), 'Reveille for Meghalaya,' p 3, March 21, 1978

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>6</sup> *North-East Mirror* (Weekly, Shillong), October 22, 1977



age They are very apprehensive of the disintegration of their State by the claims made over their Hill districts by the Nagas and the Mizos. Their discontent with the authority in Imphal reached a climax during the Janata Party rule in the State, when they noticed the fragmented and disorganised Valley's representation in the State Assembly and solid support of the Tribals, Muslims, Nepalese and the scheduled caste representatives to Shaiza's ministry in the State.

The Janata ministry was virtually ruling in the State without the confidence and support of the majority of the population. The State capital was full of rumours on various issues confronting the State during Shaiza's rule. In this situation, delay in declaring Manipuri as the official language of the State, non-inclusion of Manipuri language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, alleged decision of Shaiza's ministry to make reservation for the tribals in the State services with reference to population of each district instead of the total population of the State, attempt to declare Nepalese and Muslims as backward class people in the State, growing unemployment of the youths in the State, the Maeties failure to compete as fresh entrants in the IAS by direct recruitment, non-inclusion of Hindu Maeties within the purview of the Minority Commission, etc., have disturbed the people of the valley.

Increasing corruption, monopolisation of big commercial activities in urban conglomeration by the 'myang' exploiters, ever increasing strength of the high tribal officials in the State secretariat virtually converting it into a mini-Mizoram, have created a rift in the hills and the valley on the one hand, and between the valley people and the outsiders on the other. The all-India political parties were regarded in the State as agents of political conformism.

**A**vocal section of the people in the valley resent and protest when Maeties alone are treated as superior among other equally Mongoloid people of the region. It favours revival of the old Maetie religion by discarding Hindu Vaisnavism as well as the

revival of the old script for the Manipuri language. The State of Manipur has been in torment since the middle of 1978 when Chinese-trained youths led by Bireswar Singh returned to the State. The fraternisation of all tribals of Mongoloid origin including the Maeties of the valley of Manipur is also being endeavoured in the State. The move is getting support both from Christian missionaries and the extremists in the State.

**I**n the State of Assam, with the advent of the regional parties among the plainsmen, the doctrine of the 'sons of the soil' and the drive against the foreign nationals and outsiders living in the State took a new turn. Of the two regional parties recently constituted, the P.L.P. stands to evolve a neo-nationalism of the north-eastern region, and the Assam Uppjatravadi Dal subscribes to sub-nationalism of Assam. The main plank of the AUJD according to Hazarika is four-fold: (1) To save Assam, complete provincial autonomy is essential, (2) India is not a nation and therefore cannot be a country (For a nation, according to him, is based upon one language which India lacks. He therefore advocates double citizenship and pleads for the Russian pattern of citizenship), (3) equal representation in legislature; and (4) separate State constitution.

Hazarika's party is very sore over the increasing influx of the Bengali population in Assam. He often quotes from Taya Zinkin's book mentioning 'the exploitation by pressures of Bengalees in the employment of jobs'.<sup>7</sup> This book also highlights 'how Pounjabis and Bengalese deprive local people of the higher jobs'.<sup>8</sup> Pabindra Deka, a law student, is the joint secretary of the P.L.P., and is very active among the Assamese student community in organising public opinion on the question of foreign nationals and outsiders.

The PLP document explains in detail the population problem in the region and its impact on the State of Assam. The document demands deportation of all those people from

East Bengal who have not been given citizenship right under the Citizenship Act 1955. The PLP does not consider a post-1955 issue as either 'belated or closed'.<sup>9</sup> It claims that foreign nationals and the migrants have created small Ulsters and have been successful in maintaining pressure on the national political parties.<sup>10</sup> These forces inhibited the growth and development of the Assamese language, worked for the separation of the district of Cachar, sponsored the spirit of communal representation in all walks of life, and have succeeded in registering themselves as voters, manipulated election results with the collaboration of power-crazy politicians.<sup>11</sup>

**T**he nature and form of tension in the north-east region may be classified into three groups.

- 1 The first group contains the States of Nagaland, Manipur and the Union territory of Mizoram. In these areas the insurgency and the secessionist movements had started in the post-Constitution period.
- 2 The second group consists of the States of Assam and Meghalaya which have a long border with Bangladesh. These States are afflicted with the unprecedented influx of the people from Nepal and Bangladesh.
- 3 The State of Tripura and the Union territory of Arunachal stand on a separate footing as the nature of the problem confronted by them differs from the rest of the region.

In Nagaland the question of revival of insurgency is linked with the solution of outstanding problems vide clause 3 of the Shillong Accord. The undergrounds have not so far spelt the 'other issues' of this Accord. They want to involve Phizo for the

<sup>9</sup> P.L.P. document No 3, October 1978, p 11

<sup>10</sup> Ibid p 12

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Taya Zinkin, *Challenges in India*, p 112

<sup>8</sup> Ibid



final settlement of the Naga problem. There has been virtually a deadlock over the issue, although closed-door attempts are being made by the two sides to come to an agreement and to establish normalcy in the State. The State has not suffered widespread revival of insurgency since the signing of the Accord, though a few clashes with the underground and the security forces at the international borders and some arrests have been reported.

The inter-State border clashes in early 1979 were the main events in the area in which it is alleged that the disguised Naga para military forces and undergrounds took a leading part to terrorize and kill the people on the Assam portion of the border of the State. The Naga youth front was also organised to raise the voice of protest against the Freedom of Religion Bill and Anti-cow slaughter legislation.

In Mizoram, after the failure of a settlement with Laldenga, the MNF faction led by him revived the insurgency in June last. The Union territory once again turned into a major area of conflict with the Indian security forces and the underground insurgents. Earlier, the MNF had given a call for the boycott of elections in the territory and served notice on non-Mizos to leave the territory before 1st of July 1979. This threat was not an empty one. A P.W.D. subdivisional officer hailing from the Cachar district of Assam was murdered at Sartul. This triggered off the counter protest in Cachar district against the Mizos resulting in the killing of three of them. This was sufficient provocation for another round of looting and burning of non-Mizo property in the territory.

The situation became tense in the Mizoram capital as well as the border areas along the affected region of Assam. It was later brought under control with firm handling by the local administration and the deployment of the security forces. The division in the ranks of the underground led to the arrest and surrender of the hostile underground. The insurgency which was revived temporarily ended soon and peace prevailed over the territory.

The Chinese-trained Maoists constitute the backbone of the sporadic violent and insurgent activities in the State of Manipur. Revolutionary bodies like the Peoples Liberation Army, the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak, the Revolutionary People's Front and several splinter groups carry on guerilla activities in the valley. These banned guerilla bodies in the valley conduct hit-and-run terrorist attacks on unwary government officials and the security forces. They open fire on them and snatch their rifles and ammunition. After the dismissal of Shaziza's ministry in the State, the guerillas gave a new dimension to their violent activities. Now their targets of attack include well-known politicians of the State. A few of them have already lost their lives and several have been seriously injured.

In the State of Assam the political tension on the issue of foreign nationals and migrants has taken the shape of a people's movement. It is being carried on by the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad and the All-Assam Students Union. It is a peaceful movement on Gandhian lines in which a large number of the women and even State government employees have also participated in mass picketing before government offices and staged satyagraha, dharna, bundh and mass hartal for the success of their agitation. The movement is using the power of oil to impress upon the Central Government the enormity and urgency of the problem arising due to the heavy influx of foreigners in the region. The agitation in Assam has succeeded in stopping the flow of oil by the closure of the oil refineries in the State. The State of Assam has also suffered violent clashes and loss of lives between the agitators and the alleged foreign nationals inhabiting the different parts of the State. The agitation has largely been successful in the Brahmaputra valley where the call for the boycott of Lok Sabha elections has been effective. However, in the Cachar district the agitation has not made its impact. Here, Bhegalis dominate.

In Meghalaya, the sentiments of the soft and sophisticated Khasis,

who remained peaceful during the prereorganisation days are being exploited against the non-tribals living in Shillong. Different local-regional parties are competing with each other to sway local sentiments on the issue. Prior to the widespread riot in October 1979 in Shillong between the tribals and the non-tribals, the pattern of clash between them was of the nature of harassment and obstructing the normal activities of the non-tribals on one plea or another. The non-tribals complain that they were often denied ordinary human rights in the State. Tribals used to occupy their houses, chairs in the public offices and in several cases, individual beatings had become very common. At times the villagers were also brought to Shillong to assault and terrorize non-tribals, especially Bengalis living there.

During the puja ceremonies, the desecration of the idol of goddess Kali by the tribal youths and their beating by the non-tribals resulted in widespread violent activities including arson, loot and burning of the properties of non-tribals in Shillong. The situation in the State took a dramatic turn when a Bengali Congress MLA, Manik Das, was shot dead along with a lady ex-MLA and the driver of his car on the Shillong Gauhati road. The non-tribals of Shillong organised a protest march against this ghastly murder. When their procession reached close to the Shillong Secretariat, unexpectedly it met an opposing procession resulting in a free for all. Soon after this incident the capital witnessed the murder of the five Bengalis who were dragged out of the bus on the Dowki road outside Shillong. In the Garo Hills at Cherapunji, the Ramakrishna Mission has also been the target of attack of the tribals. The mission activities were disturbed by the cutting off of water and electricity connections. Harassment to the inmates of the mission increased following the Assembly elections.

It is a matter of concern to all that the Church leaders have not condemned the violence in the State, although some of them took an active part in the selection of the Chief Minister following the Assembly elections of 1978.



With the declaration of the Lok Sabha elections, the Khasi Students' Union also gave a call for a non-cooperation movement against the revision of the electoral roll and boycott of the parliamentary elections in Shillong. On the successful boycott of the Shillong Parliamentary constituency the call for non-cooperation has now been withdrawn.

The role of some of the plains' Christians living in the Hills who incited the tribals to exhibit their religious fanaticism is deplorable. For example, the P D I C leader, Martin Narayan Majaw, a Keralite Christian and a political maveric of Meghalaya openly preached violence for self-preservation of the tribals.

In Tripura and Arunachal the condition is very different from the rest of the region. In the former, the tribal resentment is against the deprivation of their lands by the refugees of Bangladesh. They are striving for the introduction of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution for safeguarding their interests. The TUJS and the local church are active among the tribals. The Mizo extremists are also trying to establish contact with the Tripuris and violent incidents are reported on the adjoining areas of Mizoram in the State.

Christian missionaries are very active on the borders of Arunachal. The native population of the Union Territory is striving to maintain its indigenous faith and prevent missionary activities in the Territory. This has created tension and wide allegations of harassment to the Christians in Arunachal. Christian missionaries try to baptize the Arunachal youths when they come to Shillong for higher studies. This practice is resented by the government of Arunachal. The Territory has also border trouble with the State of Assam, but Arunachal is almost free from insurgency and any secessionist movements like those which have overtaken other parts of the region.

The tension and the political turmoil which has gripped the north-east in recent times is the result of several factors taking place in the different units of the region. Whereas

in Meghalaya the tension is generated by the aspirational deprivation of the tribals, in Manipur valley the Maeties suffer from progressive deprivation in their State. In the State of Assam and Tripura the political tension has been on the increase due to manipulative deprivation of the local people by the foreign nationals and migrants living in these States.

In the pre-reorganisation days, tension was mostly confined to the Hills of Assam and it increased as the State of Assam became smaller. Then several factors also resulted in the rising anti-Assamese feelings in the Hills of the north-east. Now, the emphasis on the socio-economic programme and integrated development of the region have brought the various decision-makers in the region on to one platform, the North Eastern Council. Slowly and gradually the political leaders of Assam have discovered the homogeneous elements in the region as well. These are lack of infrastructure for rapid industrial growth, the problem of the foreign nationals and the migrants and a common feeling among them that despite 30 years of independence, the region has remained a colonial market for the products of the rest of the country. The leaders are in harmony on these issues confronting them. Assam holds the key to the solution of these problems confronting the region.

This notable development has obliterated the anti-Assamese feeling in the Hill States. The aforesaid factors have brought among the member units of the region a sort of emotional integration which was hitherto lacking. The initiative in this regard has been taken by the State of Assam and is conscious of establishing its dominant identity once again. On the success of its drive against the foreign nationals and others, the State of Assam hopes to retrieve its position in the region from which it suffered by the loss of the territory, after the formation of the States/Territories in the region. As regards the inter-State border trouble, it is a legacy of the reorganisation of Assam which can be solved by adopting an attitude of give and take in a spirit of mutual goodwill and understanding.



# Changing police functions

R B JAIN

THE nature of police functions in all civilized countries has undergone substantial changes. From the traditional 'watch and ward' duties to the 'preservation of peace in the communities', the police has come a long way to becoming a positive instrument of social change. In the modern complex societies, factors such as the impact of Westernization, industrialization, urbanization, economic growth, societal development, disintegration of family, slackening discipline in educational institutions, the growing political unrest and the existence of gross social and economic inequalities have transformed its role from being purely an institution of legal justice to an instrument of socio-economic and political development. Besides the prevention of crime and detection of juvenile delinquency, the police are also to ensure enforcement of a wide variety of regulations relating to traffic, sanitation, licensing laws, control of crowds, demonstrations, moral order

and public decency and also those socio-economic legislations which promote the equitable development of all sections of society. This indeed is a tall order and whether in India the police would ever be able to live up to such a role-expectation has always been viewed with a marked degree of skepticism.

Both organizationally and functionally, the Indian police has subscribed to an administrative philosophy of negativism. Even to-day it does not — and given the existing police culture, perhaps cannot — act in areas which are not punitive and prohibitive. Historically, it has never been a 'citizen police'. Its service rationale lies in merely protecting the life and property of citizens against thieves, robbers and vandals. In the post-independence era, it has been increasingly used to curb large scale violence erupting out of movements having popular backing and mass appeal, but directed against certain



groups of persons, on the basis of religion, language or region or against public property, or violence arising out of students agitations, labour unrest, communal disturbances and political or other internal disorders

In all these areas, the police finds itself in a very difficult and sensitive situation. If it supports the popular aspirations of the people at that time, it fails in its law enforcement duties. On the other hand, if it acts according to the law, which it must, it comes in conflict with large masses of people. Despite the fact that the use of force might have been justified by the exigencies of circumstances, the police almost always earns great public unpopularity and often faces the ignominy of further public or judicial inquiries. The task of the police is far from enviable even in its primary sphere of operation, and to conceive that the police can still be expected to propagate a philosophy of positivism and public welfare or project a 'service oriented' outlook is perhaps to expect too much from an organisation whose basic credentials have been rooted in the philosophy of maintaining public order at any cost.

All that is said in defence of the police should not be construed to mean that the police forces should become completely autonomous — free standing and independent. Autonomy of the police force implies their right to arrest any offender or class of offenders irrespective of their social status, their profession, their religion or political alignments. But in India ministers who are in power have too often interfered with the police in the discharge of their legitimate duties. This results in the police not taking the kind of action which they think appropriate in dealing with a situation, where peace has to be maintained and law has to be enforced. Because of the instructions given to them by ministers and in several cases by the politicians belonging to the ruling party or parties, or the high ups in the official hierarchy, the police declines to take any action against the law-breakers. Those arrested are let off instead of being brought before courts of justice and tried. Thus, due to the inter-

ference by ministers, politicians and other influentials, the law enforcing agency in our country has lost much of this freedom.

The recent incident in Naraipur (U P) is a grim reminder of the unspeakable atrocities apparently committed by those who are responsible for law and order. And the one at Parasbigha (Bihar) has been supposedly the doings of the hirelings of a landlord, who had struck terror in that village. In each of the cases, officials and ministers have gone through the motions of investigating the crime and strengthening the law enforcement machinery. However, it is a matter of shame that horrible atrocities including mass rape and roasting of people alive, continue to be perpetrated with impunity.

Notwithstanding the sociological and economic explanations like the caste conflict and the everpresent tension between landlords and cultivators as the root causes behind such incidents, the fact remains that in many such cases it is the ruling politicians who must be held responsible for the growing lawlessness and violence. It is easy to find scapegoats amongst officials, but it is not a deniable fact that the main reason for the gross inefficiencies of the police has been the habitual interference by the politicians in police administration. It is also a fact that the police has suffered greatly because the ministers at the State levels have constantly remained engaged in endless intrigues between themselves leading to frequent political intervention in the lawful discharge of their functions. Further, the existence of various pockets of influence at all levels have asserted considerable adverse impact in the effective discharge of duties by the police. It is time that the existence of such pockets of influence are recognised and remedial measures taken against assertion of such influences.

Another recent development is the arbitrary manner in which the incumbents to the highest posts in the police hierarchical system are moved out with every change in the government giving an impression that the Police Commissioners, the IGP's, etc., should be committed not only to the

political party in power but also personally to the Chief Ministers. The practice has sinister implications which may not be readily accepted, but nothing can be more injurious to morale and the prestige of the police service personnel at all levels resulting in their inaction and subservience. These bewildering changes have contributed to groupism and intrigues at the highest level — a consequence which is as undesirable as it is disgusting.

The year 1979 witnessed the surfacing of an acute police discontent that had been simmering for many years. The wave of rioting and other acts of defiance by the police that spread from Punjab in the North and later affected Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Orissa, finally, reaching Tamil Nadu in the south have at least brought out the important fact of the neglect of the genuine grievances of the men in the force. While the agitations in themselves erupted quite suddenly, equally surprising was the speed and haste with which many proposals, which had been gathering dust in the home departments of the States and the Centre for several years, were then sanctioned.

The basic flaw in the current set up today that the government does not act unless an agitation is launched, irrespective of the agony of the aggrieved group or the danger in a situation, dormant or explosive, has once again been highlighted. Given the climate of agitation and protest in the country, every section of society is resorting to agitation to voice its grievances. Policemen, as human beings, cannot remain unaffected by such an environment, particularly because their working conditions, pay scales and living facilities are among the lowest in India.

The main reasons for the unrest among the police forces include lack of accommodation for the men and their families, meagre emoluments, salaries, allowances and benefits which are nowhere in comparison to those of the personnel employed in other departments of the government, particularly in the public sector.



The faults in their service conditions and hours of work indeed are very deplorable. Compared to those of other public sector employees, an average policeman still lives a dog's life slogging amidst all sorts of weather, receiving abuses and stones from the people and facing enquiries. Policemen do not get annual vacations and even Sundays and other holidays are beyond the reach of all of them. The irksome political pressures adversely affect their proper functioning as a slight error of judgement on their part may result in their frequent and arbitrary transfers. The entire society is today hostile towards the police force. No wonder that the typical image of an Indian policeman today is that of a 'merciless, beastly, violent and a tactless person'.

One could argue that the unrest among policemen is a very serious matter and if these guardians of law and order themselves indulge in acts of lawlessness, citizens are extremely worried for they can easily become victims of anti-social elements in the country. But in the present climate of agitations, when the best paid employees in the banks, private sector, public undertakings, educational institutions and other departments of government can resort to demonstrations, slogan shouting, work-to-rule agitations, work stoppages, gheraos, etc., it is somewhat surprising that this had not occurred earlier.

Obviously, the biggest cause of all this has been the failure of the 'personnel administration' in the police forces. The Indian police with its semi-skilled and ill-equipped manpower and its heavy dependence upon human qualities like work, efficiency, courage, devotion to duty, dedication, discipline, endurance, involvement in very sensitive social, economic and political issues, needs much more forward looking and positive personnel management practices. The changing socio-economic scene and transforming values in society have thrown up new challenges for the police machinery and it is only through a good personnel management programme that there could be optimum utilisation of manpower and resources to achieve maximum efficiency. Following the

spate of such police agitations, the Chief Ministers Conference with the Janata Home Minister in June 1979 decided (a) to permit the policemen to form associations subject to restrictions specified by the interim report of the Police Commission, (b) to set up machinery both at the district and State levels for quick redressal of grievances, (c) to dispense with the system of orderlies, (d) to rationalize the working hours of police constables and to define his status, (e) to provide improved housing facilities, and (f) to check political interference in police administration. These steps, although falling far short of a positive police personnel programme nonetheless provide a good ground for generating the kind of a morale and motivation so necessary among the police officials.

Some of these problems had been engaging the attention of the National Police Commission under the chairmanship of Dharam Vira which was set up in 1977 to investigate and report on various aspects of police administration in India. It has so far submitted three reports and the last two are still to come. In the first of the three reports (February 1979) the Commission has dealt at length with the subject of police morale and efficiency and has in the context recommended substantial improvements in the living and working conditions of the constabulary which forms 80 per cent of the police force. While conceding them the right to associate, the Commission wants that the new pay structure for the policemen should be fixed on the norms adopted in Britain — namely, 'the standard rates of wages given to a skilled worker plus a margin for the hardships and privations faced by a policeman in the discharge of his duties and a further margin for the heavy social responsibility discharged by him in exposing himself to dangers'. The Commission had recommended an additional expenditure of Rs 2,000 crores for improving emoluments, housing facilities and weaponry to the police.

In its second report (August 1979), the Commission suggested that the police force should be completely insulated from politics. This

does not mean, however, that the police are required to be isolated from the national mainstream. On the contrary, as the Commission observes, the police have a much wider area of social responsibility than was assigned to them before independence. In fact, the Commission desires that the police should now assume a 'service-oriented' role of which enforcement of the law would be a part. Included in this role would be the protection of the 'weaker sections of the community from exploitation and harassment' and assistance 'in resolving conflicts and promoting amity by appropriate measures', which would cover 'mediation and counselling'.

Maintenance and enforcement of the law would remain a vital part of the duties of the police force, but these functions need not conflict with a policeman's duties related to the goal of a 'socialist, secular, democratic welfare State'. The effort to extend the frontiers of the duties and obligations of the police force by relating them to the broader concept of service conforms to the current thinking in the civilised world, although policemen would continue to be judged primarily by their ability to enforce the law with fairness and firmness.

In the third report (February 1980), the Commission has recommended summary punishment of delinquent police personnel without being influenced by political interference as a strong curb to widespread corruption among the custodians of the law. While the full implications of the proposal are not available, the objective to stop police brutalities and corruption are not that simple to be achieved. A more forceful and continuous programme of the review of police conduct needs to be put into practice. This should comprise of (a) an internal review by the departmental review boards; (b) external review by civilian review boards or the judicial commissions, review by ombudsman type institutions prevailing in certain countries to look into specific complaints of police excesses or misuse of power, and (c) finally, review by the judicial courts. Nothing short of these measures could perhaps obtain the desired results in policing the police.



# Books

**IN THE WAKE OF NAXALBARI: A History of the Naxalite Movement In India** by Sumanta Banerjee, Calcutta, Subarnekha, 1980

**POLITICS MAINLY INDIAN** by W H MORRIS-Jones, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1978

THE first book is a sympathetic yet balanced account of the Naxalites in India by a working journalist who has close contacts with many activists of the movement. He has been able to draw on underground material and published and unpublished party literature along with press reports. He also cites a good deal of official and non-official assessments of and statistics about the socio-economic changes and government policies in the country in an attempt to put the movement in its context.

With a blanket characterization of the Indian State as the State of the big landlords and comprador-bureaucrat capitalists, the Naxalite ideologues entertain equally unrealistic illusions about the revolutionary disposition of the Indian working class and its revolutionary allies, namely, the entire peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. In the words of Charu Mazumdar, 'These three main classes are the main force of the revolution. Among these the peasants constitute the overwhelming majority. For this reason, the revolution depends mainly on them. Hence, the working class as the leader and the petty bourgeoisie as a revolutionary class must unite with the peasantry. It is precisely this unity which we call the united front' (quoted on p. 56).

The CPI (M-L) envisaged armed peasant rebellions throughout the country in one 'liberated area' after another and finally closing in on the cities. In spite of the idealism, courage, and devotion of the Naxalite cadres this did not happen, and sporadic outbreaks of violence aimed at the annihilation of 'class enemies' in a few pockets of tribal peasantry and in Calcutta were successfully crushed. In the last chapter of the

book the author presents a critique of the movement which is interesting because it reveals how the Naxalites themselves appraise their failure and what are the factors they refer to in accounting for it.

The main strength of the book lies in its quite comprehensive treatment of the CPI (M-L) ideological view of political strategy and its interpretation of the socio-economic changes in the country.

MORRIS-JONES' *Politics Mainly Indian* may appear to be an odd book to be reviewed in an issue of the *Seminar* focusing on India's 'violent present'. But I have picked it up on purpose if only to contrast the more restive third and violent first half of the fourth post-independence decades with the less easily agitated first two. The major part of the period covered by these papers was, as is evident from their contents, characterized by an open polity, a competitive party system centering round the Congress Party, an assertive Parliament, reasonably autonomous State and local political arenas, free and fair elections more predictable than the monsoon, a pace of social change clearly straining the political institutional channels but far from conveying the impression of their impending explosion — all together constituting 'India's Political Miracle,' to borrow a chapter heading from the book. Things are so vastly different today — partly in terms of actualities and partly of uncertainties — that the papers seem to conjure up the vision of a nostalgia.

The core of the occasional papers anthologized here deal with the Congress-dominated dominant party system' of the pre-J.P. Movement and pre-Emergency India (Parts 2 and 3), with sideline concerns with political ideologies of Indian political elites such as Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan, and with Pakistan, Bangladesh and the new Commonwealth, among other things (Parts 1 and 4). Although Morris-Jones is avidly read by Indianists on all aspects of Indian politics, he is more known among the comparativists for his model of India's dominant party system.



Morris-Jones succinctly describes the Indian party system prior to 1967 in the following way: 'The system over which it [the Congress Party] presides is characterized by "openness" of three distinct kinds. First, the party itself is open. movement in and out of the organization is fairly free, competition for power and status within the party is vigorous and increasing knowledge of these inner shifts and struggles is quite accessible to the public. Second, it is open to other parties to enter the competition for power they may not find funds easy to obtain and the electoral system presents them with difficulties similar to those encountered by small parties like the English Liberals, but they normally ... suffer no legal disabilities and no serious contrived unfairness — as indeed their collecting of 55 per cent of the vote testifies. Finally, there is a most important "openness" in the relations between the Congress and the other parties not merely is there an absence of barriers, there is positive communication and interaction between them. The opposition parties neither alternate with Congress in the exercise of power, nor do they share power in any coalition form; rather they operate by conversing with sections of Congress itself. They address themselves not so much to the policy-deaf electorate as to like-minded politician groups in the dominant party', (p. 218)

Morris-Jones is at pains to differentiate India's dominant party system from the western pluralist party systems (two party or multi-party but mainly the former), on the one hand, and the one-party States in the Third World, mainly in Africa, on the other. The conditions contributing to this kind of democratic dominance, its internal structure, and the political consequences flowing from it are also suggestively and brilliantly hinted at and hypothesized.

Although this volume proclaims to bring together 'a selection of articles, papers, and reviews, covering the Indian political scene from 1948 to 1972' (blurb on the back cover), such significant and far-reaching political events as the 1967 elections, the 1969 Congress split, and the J P Movement are present only by way of 'proxied' passing references rather than focused treatment. The trends stemming from or accelerated by the 1967 elections are insightfully summed up in a paper figuratively titled 'From Monopoly to Competition in Indian Politics'. Morris-Jones is back to his favourite theme of Indian party politics in a paper on the 1971 elections ('India Elects for Change and Stability'), which is used as a focal point of analysis of a comprehensive political event with flashbacks and glimpses of the probable future.

The 1971 Lok Sabha elections (and Vidhan Sabha elections in several States in 1972) structurally restored the dominant party system under the New Congress led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. But Morris-Jones sounds cautious against assuming that India had merely gone back to the old dominant party system under Nehru. 'The fact is that', he writes, 'as all observers testified, the election was won without a strong party organization, the great wave came in

and Congress was carried on its crest. But if that will not suffice for normal political navigation, a seagoing party vessel has to be built. The point has been put often enough even before and certainly since the elections. But evidence of a determination in this direction is not easy to find and there persists a suspicion that a leadership which found the party at worst a source of trouble and at best inessential to success may prefer the freedom of courtly rule to the necessity of institutional organization' (p. 188)

These lines, published in August 1971, preceded the 1975 Emergency by four years! A more than adequate testimonial in defence of Morris-Jones' analytical insight and political judgement to absolve him of the failure to anticipate the 1967 electoral debacle of the Congress (a year before the elections he had written 'The results of the elections, too, are not likely to surprise anyone', p. 131)! Here are cautious clues to the interpretation of the 1980 Lok Sabha elections as well, structurally in terms of arithmetic of parliamentary seats the Indian party system has again seemingly been restored to what Morris-Jones describes as the 'one-party dominant system', Rajni Kothari as the 'Congress system,' and Joseph LaPalombara as the 'predominant party system.' But India's present Congress(I)-dominated party system is sociologically and contextually different not only from the party system of the Nehru era but also from that of the latter part of the pre-Emergency India years. (The Emergency party system was, of course, even structurally different from all these, inasmuch as it fundamentally altered the rules of inter-party competition, administratively and legally harassing the 'opposition' parties and selectively helping the 'friendly' parties. It thus came to be a cross between the predominant party system and what LaPalombara calls the 'hegemonic party system'.)

**Mahendra Prasad Singh**

**ZAMINDARS, MINES AND PEASANTS: Studies in the History of an Indian Coalfield** by D. Rothermund and D.C. Wadhwa (eds). Manohar, New Delhi, 1978

IT is often assumed that modernisation leads to economic, social and political development and that the process of industrialisation makes positive impacts all over a country. However, this may not hold good in India, where poverty and traditionalism exist along with industrialisation. The book under review supports this view. It shows that industrialisation may lead to the development of 'economic dualism'. It may create 'economic enclaves' and lead to stagnated agriculture, particularly if it is imposed in a dependent, colonial country.

The explanation of a phenomenon is sought by many social scientists in terms of the environment, the local social stratification and power structure. In case of the peasantry an enquiry is also made with regard to their response to the exogenous forces intruding into their community. The present study is a



well carried out effort in this direction. The authors have adopted an interdisciplinary approach to identify the factors of socio-economic backwardness of Dhanbad District in Bihar.

The book forms the first volume of the report on the Dhanbad Research Project of the South Asia Interdisciplinary Regional Research Programme of Heidelberg University. The two other volumes entitled *Urban Growth and Rural Stagnation* and *Social Stratification and Political Structure* contain the studies made by economists and political scientists and sociologists respectively. This book explores the impact of economic development under British rule on this region. It deals with the problems of the uses and abuses of land, labour and capital. Certainly, the essays are stimulating, well argued and informative.

The first chapter, written by D. Rothermund, defines the main characteristics of the 'enclave economy'. Enclaves have only tenuous links with their environment and it will make no difference to the economy of the hinterland if they do not exist. The coalfields experienced situations of boom, stagnation and depression in their development process. This account further confirms the isolation of the enclave from its rural periphery.

The depression affected agriculture more adversely than the mine owners. Hence, the system of economic dualism between industry and agriculture persisted. The mine owners exploited the mines and labour, while no attention was paid to improvement of agriculture. The local Zamindars were lords of the land and enjoyed the privileges of a 'lion in a Zoo' even after the Permanent Settlement of 1793. The entry of the new tenure-holders, after the Zamindars' estates were encumbered, resulted in further neglect of agriculture and the peasantry. The author successfully relates the social economic change of the region to the prevailing agrarian system and development of the coalfields.

Dr. Detlef Schwerin in his essay on 'Control of Land and Labour in Chota Nagpur' explains the geographical, social and economic structure of the region which is characterised by small land holdings, widespread indebtedness, bonded labour treated like slaves, miserably poor economic conditions of the *raiya*s (the peasantry). These conditions forced the *raiya*s to migrate from their villages to seek wage employment in tea and mining. But why did they not try to raise agricultural production by improving their land by irrigation or by upgrading the upland or reclamation of forest land instead of migrating? Schwerin answers this question in terms of social stratification, local power structure and incoming of Hindus in this tribal area.

The interest of the peasantry in land is said to have been reduced on account of the emergence of petty tribal Rajas and the Hindu tenure-holders on the rural scene. The system of rents, *Beth Begari* (work without wage) and the system of *Bakshit* (the *raiya* land placed at the command of the landlord) contributed to the migration of the tenantry. This agri-

cultural inequality also created conditions for tension, unrest and revolt in Chota Nagpur. The revolt came from the tribal people of South Chota Nagpur, though the oppressive and exploitative conditions were more rampant in the Hindu dominated North Chota Nagpur. The author concludes that the unrest was, in fact, the result of the clash between two cultures — the Hindu and tribal communities.

In the third chapter, Rothermund shows how the colonial rulers became more interested in enacting tenancy acts. The growing discontentment in the peasantry as evidenced by the Mutiny of 1857 and other revolts and consequent fear of losing their Empire made it imperative for them to interfere with the 'forces of the market'. He discusses various tenancy acts passed and their impact on the peasantry and the landlords.

The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters, contributed by Dr. D. C. Wadhwa, relate to the Zamindars and the working of Zamindari. These chapters form part of his larger research work entitled *Zamindaries at Work*. After defining the Zamindari system and having given a description of Zamindaries in the Dhanbad district, Dr. Wadhwa contends, with the help of data collected, that the Zamindars exploited the tenants as they were free to charge arbitrary rents from them.

Regarding the distribution of land between the Zamindars and tenure-holders, data shows that 67.5 per cent land slipped into the hands of the tenure-holders and the Zamindars had only 32.44 per cent of land under their control. As the tenure-holders created sub-tenure holders, a large number of intermediaries between the actual cultivator and Zamindars came into existence. The study concludes that the Zamindars lost interest in the improvement of agriculture, leased out their coal-bearing lands to many coal companies, sold away or settled their lands to the tenure holders, rather than personally managing them. The author opines that the tenure-holders performed better than their Zamindars as the latter became interested only in making cash money.

In his article on 'Zamindars in Debt', Dr. Wadhwa analyses the financial position of two estates — coal and non-coal. While the study reveals no difference in indebtedness of the Zamindars of both the estates because all Zamindars had similar habits of wasting money, it also argues that British policy expressed in the form of Chota Nagpur Encumbered Estates Act, 1876, rendered them reckless, irresponsible and indifferent towards innovating agriculture and increasing agricultural produce. The Act aimed at liquidating their debts and protecting their interests with political considerations in mind.

Henner Papendieck analyses the role of the British Mining Agencies in the Indian coalfields between 1890 to 1920. He points to the low productivity, low standard of technology and mechanisation, lower standards of living and working for the miners and the growing richness of the coal companies. He rightly



suggests that the managing agency system in the colonial setting hampered the growth of the industry on modern lines. The tabular and graphic presentation of data makes the study more communicative.

In sum, the study analyses three types of captivity — of peasant to the landlord, of market to manipulation, and of labour to contract, indenture and advances. The area is characterised by the semi-feudal agrarian system which did not encourage reclamation or improvement of agriculture. The interests of the entrepreneurs in the mining industry were more in making profits than in capital investment. Thus, the economic opportunities provided by quick industrialisation did not end in the economic development of the coalfield area as a whole. It is a truism to say that economic backwardness cannot be changed into economic progress unless there is no free and wholesome manifestation and adoption of innovations by a system. The system of modernisation, fragmented and isolated as it was, stifled rather than helped the economic growth of the region. Mere changes here and there do not make much difference to the prevailing poverty and economic and social backwardness. The problem of economic development requires changes in the whole infrastructure. The policy makers in India would be well advised to pay due attention to such analyses while framing development policies.

**Raj Vir Sharma**

**INDIA A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF STAGNATION** by Prem Shanker Jha Oxford University Press

THE title of the book is self explanatory. In the writer's own words 'the decisive cause of economic stagnation after 1966 is political and not economic'. Due to the various economic policies of the government, the intermediate class, quite different from the Marxian concept, rose to political heights and since it benefitted from stagnation it worked for its perpetuation.

With the development of planning techniques, the failures have simultaneously multiplied. Government explained this paradox in terms of inadequate and incorrect statistics, non-implementation of economic policies and unforeseen setbacks. This explanation, according to Jha, is not sufficient because it does not explain the 'systematic divergence of targets from achievements'. Inaccurate statistics can bias individual targets—over production in some sectors and under production in others, but they do not lead to a systematic divergence between planned and actual achievements in general aggregates like national income unless all divergences operate in the same direction. The author here seems to be confused since it is the balance that matters. For example under production in some sectors may outrun the over production in some other sectors and the balance would remain under production.

The three assumptions on which the economic policies were based were the removal of institutional obstacles in agriculture, availability of skilled labour in industry and the project being completed in time and within the prescribed budget, proved unrealistic by experience. So far as unforeseen setbacks are concerned, though they harmed the economy, they were certainly not decisive. Indeed, in 1965-66, the rate of investment was at its peak.

Behaviour of agriculture and industrial production, employment generation, savings and investment position shows a precarious condition. While agriculture and industry grew at a decreasing rate, productive employment almost ceased to grow and savings and investment actually declined both as a percentage of national income and in absolute terms in key areas. The author is factually wrong in saying that there has been no rise in agricultural output since 1971-72. Indeed, most of the buffer stocks have been built up in the late sixties and seventies.

Jha makes a very fine, comprehensive and realistic analysis as to why the green revolution confined itself to Punjab, Haryana and Western UP. According to him, here the conditions necessary for its spread, namely, HYV seeds, irrigation, power and fertilizer coupled with consolidation of land holdings were available in plenty in the late sixties.

Marketable surplus showed an increasing trend until the early sixties, but the situation worsened from 1965 and even the wheat revolution did not create a surplus, it only restored the production to the original level of the early sixties. It was concentrated in Northern India creating local surpluses and local drop in prices. Faulty and leaky procurement policies further contributed to stagnation in agriculture. It was only in the mid seventies that the situation in agriculture improved, mainly due to a positive price policy increasing marketable surplus substantially, but which the author seems to have lost sight of.

Inflation is stated to be one of the most important factors contributing to economic stagnation. Jha traces the cause to 'the periodic failure of the monsoon' and not primarily to increases in the supply of money. Here he is partially correct. Inflation after 1974 is primarily due to increases in the supply of money and deficit financing while in the early years it was no doubt due to the failure of the monsoon and corresponding effects. What this country is facing now is stagflation and not just inflation. In a bad harvest, increase in the supply of money, rural dissaving and a decline in the inflow of smuggled gold act as a catalyst to the already rising prices. The parallel economy has also played a big role in stagnation. The probe into this unaccounted money conducted by the Wanchoo Committee proved a gross underestimate. Indiscriminate use of indirect taxes, tax evasion and faulty price controls have made the parallel economy grow faster than the legitimate one. Funds of this economy are spent lavishly on unproductive purposes contributing to a decline in investment potential and wastage of funds.



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'Reversal of economic trends after 1966 was the manifestation of deep rooted structural imbalances in the economy and the rise of political forces which at least in the short run were inimical to economic growth' This was accentuated by the droughts of 1965 and 1966 and a suspension of US Aid, the 65 and 71 Indo-Pak wars and the devaluation of the rupee in 1966 Rampant inflation was given a boost by an enormous increase in government consumption expenditure, due to a reckless expansion of the bureaucracy which was more political than economic, according to the author Some expansion in administrative machinery is bound to take place in an expanding economy, but whether it is reckless or not is a matter of opinion.

The increased consumption outlay could not be met by taxation as the taxable capacity was exhausted. Declaration of 'Plan Holiday' caused a decline in investment which the government tried to break by going in for more deficit financing but this only increased the inflationary pressure which then took a spiral turn

Though Jha does not doubt the merit of the capital intensive strategy of economic development, he is strongly critical of it in India's case on the grounds that it gave undue emphasis to heavy industry and neglected agriculture

Investment in the public sector has been primarily in capital intensive projects which by definition have low employment potential Jha questions this step, forgetting that in India the public sector was to build the infra-structure of the economy and control its 'commanding heights' His contention that the government did not allow for possible escalation in costs and delays in completion is correct Any other alternative strategy, say, of light industry first, and improving immediately people's standards of living, would further strengthen the vicious circles of poverty Thus, the contention of the author that a wrong strategy was adopted does not seem correct It is the lack of political will and indecision which has led to this Implementation policies were also defective, to which the author agrees

According to Jha, delays in the completion of projects only slowed down the growth process but did not result in its reversal The experience of 1979 shows that partly due to this, the growth process has been reversed and a negative growth rate is in sight

The private sector has also to be blamed for the stagnation experienced after 1966 While the author says that a real fall in public investment is one of the causes for a decline in investment, it does not explain it fully Government's industrial licensing policy encouraged a shift in investment to trade rather than large scale industry. Tariff policies reinforced this effect Price controls, never really withdrawn since the second world war, have given rise to the intermediate class by shifting investment from large to small scale industry and then to trade

This intermediate class is not in the Marxian sense merely transitory. It is mostly self-employed, midway between the capitalist and the working class, and forms a distinct class The rise of an intermediate class has made it difficult for the government to collect taxes by assessing incomes The intensity of class conflicts have lessened but the class configuration remains more or less the same, due to an increase in the political and economic power of the intermediate class, which is parasitic and continuously works for stagnation

On the economic side Jha suggests the removal of some of the harm done by the capital intensive strategy, and on the political side the containment of the increasing power of the intermediate class and anti-growth bias. Change will have to be gradual and not revolutionary

As the alternative strategy for industrialisation, the problem of complementarity should be solved Then, imports and exports should be minimised since imports would be capital intensive and encourage conspicuous consumption. This contention cannot be accepted on the grounds that there is need to boost foreign trade among developing countries as advocated by Khusro in the concept of 'dynamic comparative advantage' Another component which acts as a constraint to the development process, is defence which requires a capital intensive sector There is a great need to enhance the rate of saving and government should reform radically the pricing and taxing policies to generate funds For this, price controls on all except sugar and foodgrains should be lifted and these be subjected to dual price control (which is being presently done)

Secondly, excise duties on all items should be drastically reduced in order to reduce the cascading effects on their prices So far as direct taxes are concerned, Jha favours an expenditure tax of a small amount similar to Kaldor's concept but the method of doing so is different and simpler Investment should be given a new direction using cost-benefit analysis extensively World prices should be considered in this connection and not the domestic prices thus eliminating the effect of domestic tariffs

The author also suggests some political reforms such as a State fund for recognized political parties as in Scandinavian countries

Jha skips one of the major and important causes of stagnation in the economy, that of obsolete technology which has hindered the growth of exports This has been mainly due to the political decision of discouraging the import of technology

The book certainly gives a comprehensive analysis of the stagnating pressures faced by the economy since the mid sixties Ample examples have been cited, some of them amusing On the whole the book is thought provoking though not without its drawbacks

Aditya Khanna



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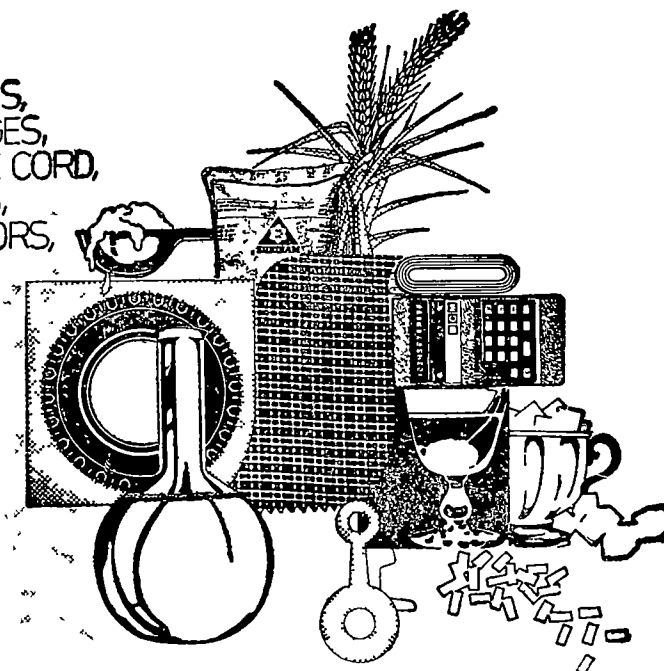
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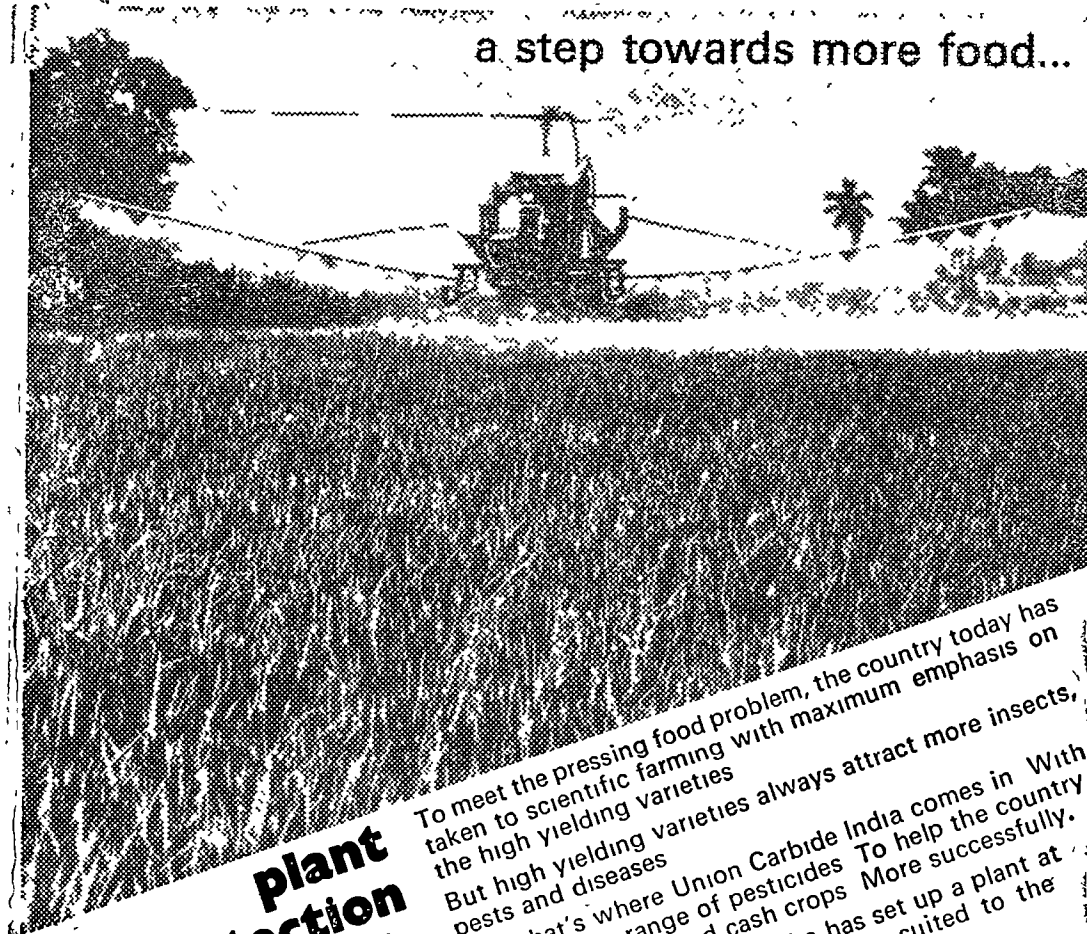
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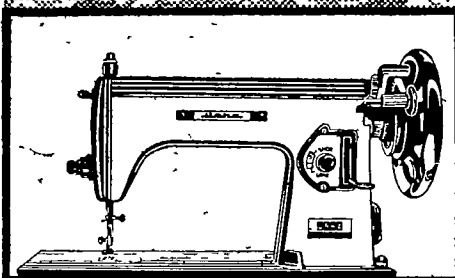




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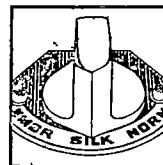
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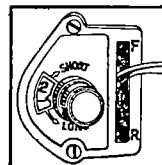
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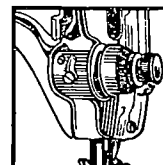
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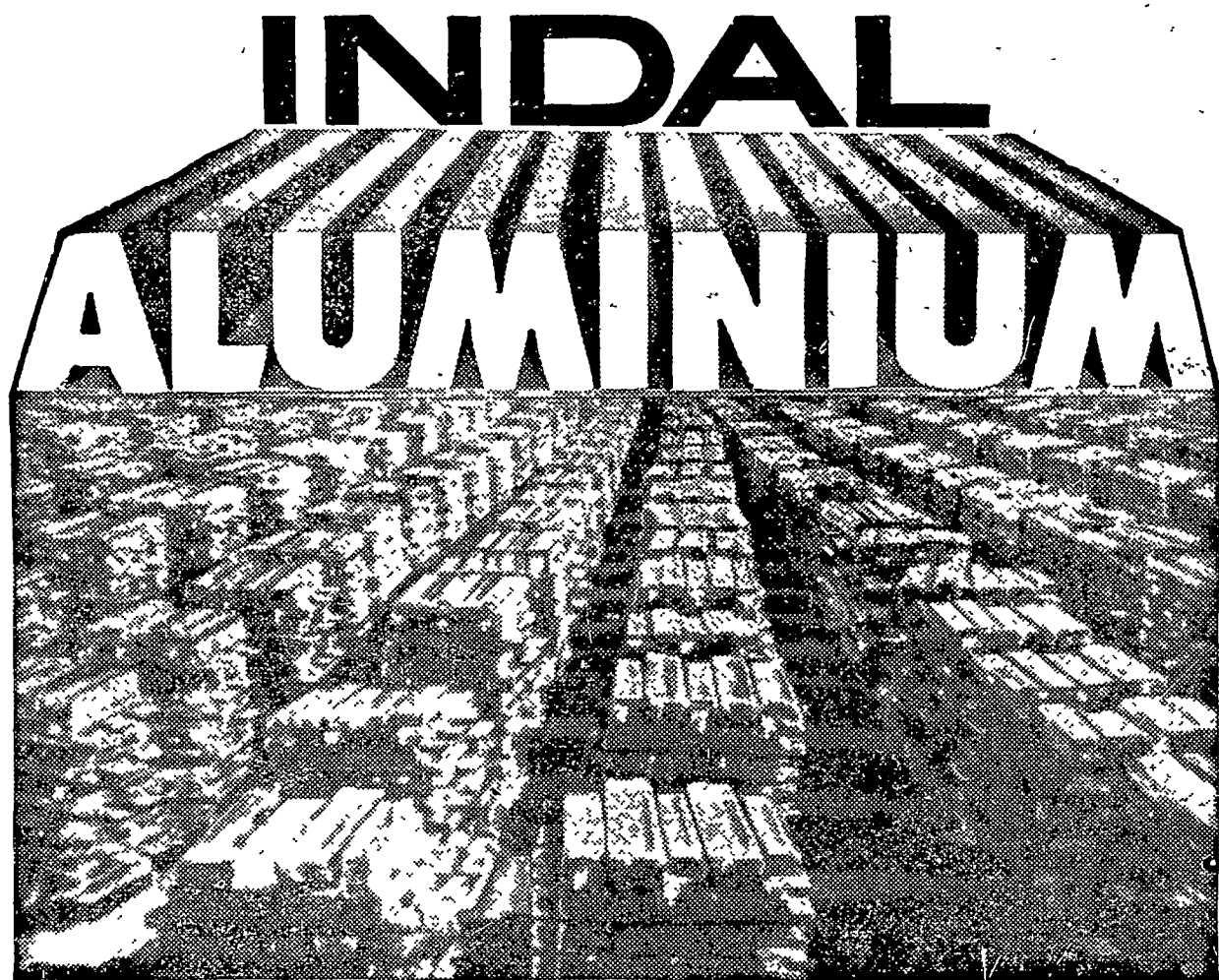
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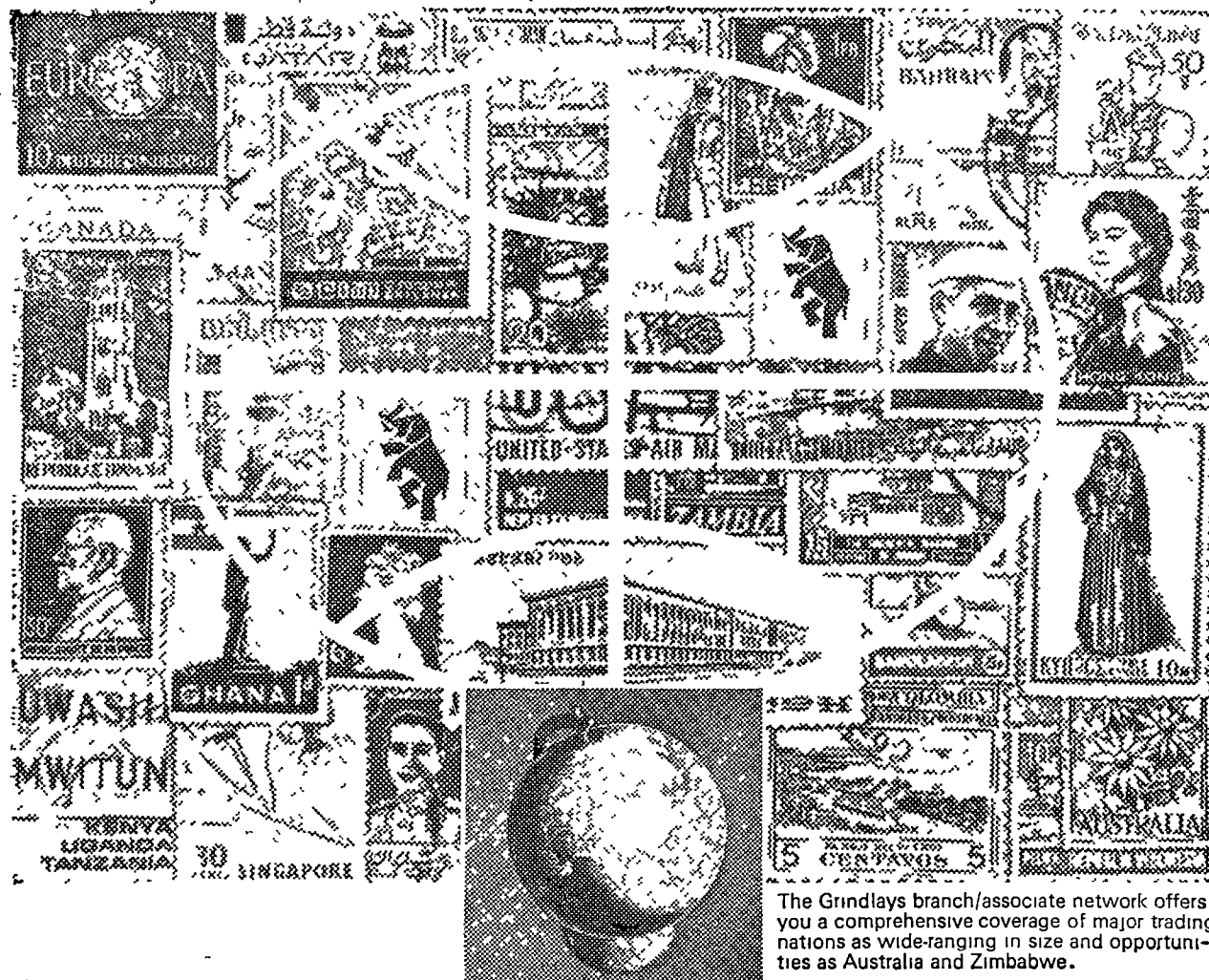


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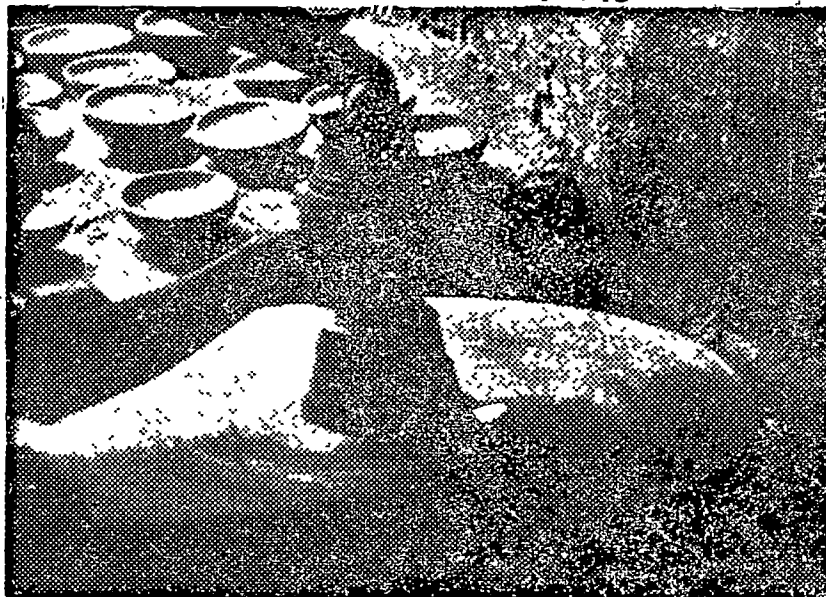
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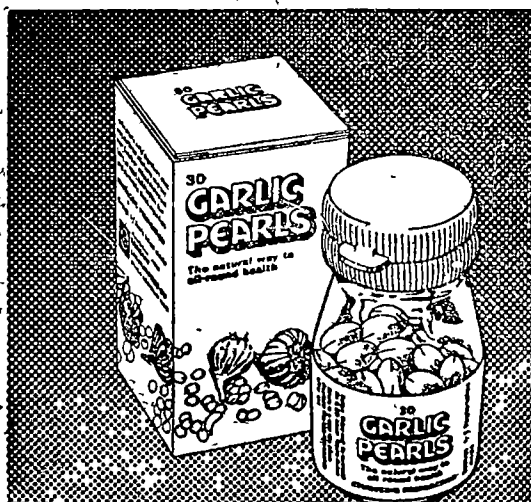
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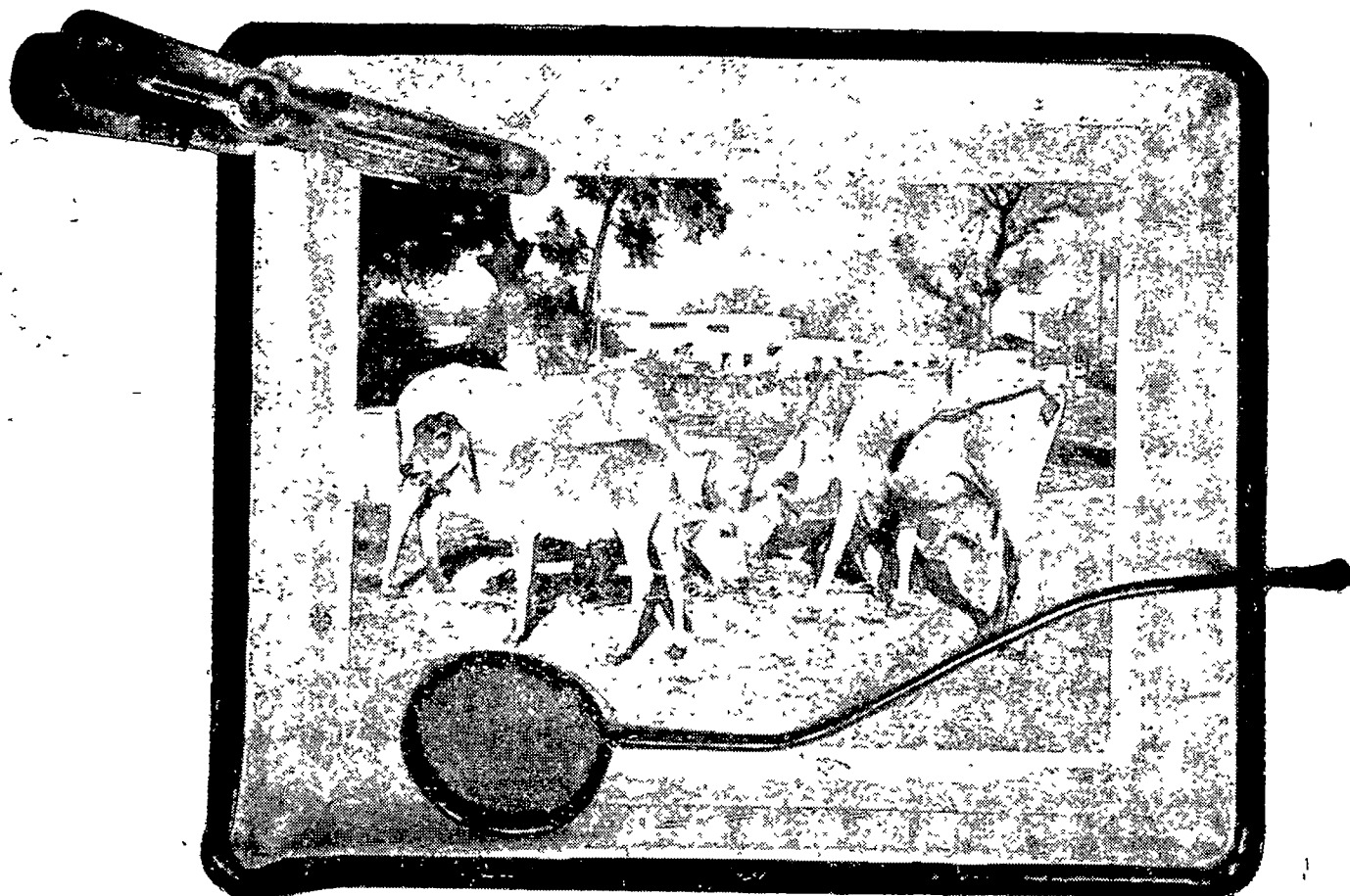
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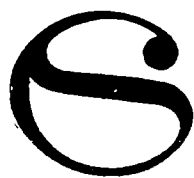


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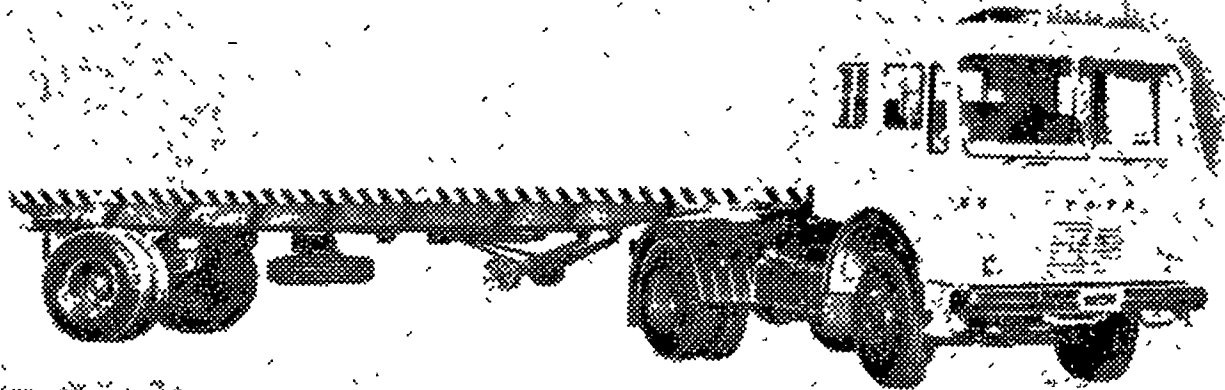
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specialist too, has voiced his views. In this way it has been possible to answer a real need of today, to present the facts and ideas of this age and to help thinking people arrive at a certain degree of cohesion and clarity in facing the problems of economics, of politics, of culture.

Publisher/ROMESH THAPAR

Managing Editor/RAJ THAPAR

Production/TEJBIR SINGH

Circulation/C. B. K.

Published from Malhotra Building, Janpath, New Delhi-1 Telephone 46534 Cable Address Seminar New Delhi Single copy: 8 pence; 85 cents (\$). Yearly Rs. 30, £ 4, \$ 10. Three Year Rs. 75, £ 10, \$ 25. Reproduction of material prohibited unless permitted.

## NEXT MONTH: POLICING



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## DEBATING AN AGENDA

a symposium

on an

agenda for India

symposium participants

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This issue of Seminar carries an edited version of the discussions that took place at the Convention held in Delhi last April around the *Agenda for India* which was published in our January issue. Some two hundred persons from all over India participated. On behalf of the Steering Committee, Rajni Kothari, Bashiruddin Ahmed, Mrinal Datta-Chaudhuri, George Verghese and Kuldip Nayar opened the discussions on the different chapters of the *Agenda*. Romesh Thapar was in the Chair.

## The debate

**Romesh Thapar:** I want to make quite clear from the start that there is no stratagem which we have worked out as a group to do any specific task. We were a bunch of people who met for the first time as a group during the Emergency. We were anxious to, somehow, clear our mind as to what should be done. And after the Emergency we continued to meet. We had a common kind of commitment which turned out to be rather defective. We believed that perhaps an alternative could be formed around the Janata concept. I want to be quite honest and frank with you. We were defective in our thinking. We had many illusions and as the crisis of the State took on the serious proportions that it did, we began to think in terms of preparing a paper which would help re-focus on issues, on the crisis of the economic and political system.

Basically, we anchored ourselves to two concepts because we already hold a series of conflicting views and anyone who has witnessed some of our meetings over the last three or four months would wonder whether we were friends at all. We anchor ourselves on two fundamentals, one is democratic values. It is a vague term but we try to define it. The second is distributive justice. We want these two thrusts to somehow fuse into a meaningful attitude not for a little country without complexities as one would think of France or Belgium or Germany but of a world of its own — India, a continent with all the dramas and traumas which we have witnessed since the passing of Jawaharlal Nehru.

Now, we are united in one basic fact. We wish to somehow salvage the democratic centre of our political life from the authoritarian threat. It is not a battle that is exclusive to India. It is a global battle. It is caused by many factors. How this democratic centre is to be salvaged for our federal polity is what is really the task before us. I want to make it clear

that the agenda as such, the document which was sent out to you, is not under discussion. We are not here to tear it apart or put it together or to claim it, nothing of the sort. We hope that as a result of the discussions here we can make our understanding more specific, more intelligent, more rooted in the Indian reality. We are not uninitiated people. We are aware of all the political controversies. We know the ideological confrontation that this country is facing. But I want very much as chairman to urge upon you, very precise interventions which help clarity. I would urge upon you to forget the introductions which are normally part of the ritual of a meeting. Please be precise, please be brutal. Please do not be personal, because that only makes the job of the Chair very much more difficult.

I will try to moderate the interventions in such a way that each has between five to seven minutes.

This morning we are having a kind of general discussion. This will help you to present your concept of what you think of the real guts of the crisis. It is very necessary for us to know that because we don't want to suffer from mountain-topism.

We will ultimately from this discussion, as a group, prepare another document, we hope, and this document will also be a consensus document and we will send it to every MLA and MP in the country in the hope that he can begin to think about India rather than himself. If we succeed in this task, I think this meeting will have been well worth it. I want again to emphasise the spirit in which we are holding this meeting — to find a way through the confusions that face us. I am going to ask Rajni to introduce the discussion.

**Rajni Kothari:** Basically, a feeling has grown over the last several years that we are in the middle of a



structural crisis — a crisis in the very system of our polity, economy and their impact on the social system. I would like to characterise it as a breakdown of consensus. I do not agree with those who think that we have been wrong all the way. No one in our group thinks that. We did have a system, we had an operating structure. There was a fair amount of consensus on its ideological, institutional premises in respect of certain pre-suppositions on which the system was based, and in respect of some kind of a social base of our politics. And in some ways it was a system fairly unique in the Third World or for that matter in any part of the world.

I don't want to take time in giving my analysis of it but having said that I would also like to say that when one talks of a system, it is not merely a political system in the sense of a constitutional framework but it had an economic and social content to it which was modelled on certain assumptions about the nature of the challenge that the country faced at the dawn of Independence and the historical phase we were in, in a certain global context. Jawaharlal Nehru was the most articulate spokesman of this understanding but there were many others, including the intellectuals, who shared this. During the last decade starting somewhere in '67, we entered a period of change, a period of possible re-alignment and re-structuring of the system. There were deeper forces at work, the deprived and low-placed strata of rural India coming alive, becoming aware of their rights, a certain stirring of consciousness, a stirring of struggle arising out of that consciousness, an increase in the level of politicisation of the masses and a certain turmoil in the social structure which gave rise to quite different demands on the political system and the national economy than we were used to, let's say in the period from 1950 to 1965. And today or, indeed, for the last ten to 15 years, the system has been out of gear as a result of these changes and the thinking capacity to deal with them.

The political structure, what we usually call super-structure, is found lagging behind the massive changes taking place at the grass-roots. Response of the leadership across the party spectrum is based on older models, earlier assumptions, earlier principles of management and control. And therefore the basic crisis that we have is, for once to use a social science cliché, a crisis of legitimacy. The crisis that arises out of the incapacity of the government, of the governing structure to perform, to deliver the goods. And the result of this is that electoral politics on which the political system is based, is proving to be an insufficient basis for both legitimacy and enforcing performance, for translating mandates given to the parties that come to power into reality, for translating transient loyalties that get stirred up at the time of election into abiding identities and affiliations as was the case in the earlier period.

And it does not matter which party swept the polls. We had this situation after 1971. We had it after 1977 after completing a different kind of election. And there are already people saying that we may face

a similar situation of non-performance, lack of delivery of goods, dealing with problems in management and control rather than restructuring the system even after the 1980 elections which gave another massive victory.

The electorate itself is quite conscious but all it can do in elections to show its anger, is to dismiss a group from power and bring in another group. It has no capacity to enforce the new group that comes to power to, in fact, translate the mandate into reality. This is what is meant by the challenge of change, by the crisis of change, the need for a structural change because re-structuring needs moving towards a new consensus. Once a new consensus is achieved, one can still hope that electoral politics, democratic politics, the kind of social-economic programmes that would be needed as part of this new consensus would once again acquire a certain normalcy.

But we are in an abnormal time. The new consensus will have to be programmatic, institutional and, above all, ideological, and in respect of the relationship between the fast changing social structure and the political structure. And I think it is in that larger context that I would like this particular document, and the debate, more than the document, to be steered this morning. This particular thing is not a social-science document, as I mentioned. It is not a party kind of document. Politicians will not be happy with it because it does not have a point-by-point listing. It does have a certain listing of issues, a certain classification of issues. It lacks an over-arching framework. It has not gone into providing a model, an alternative model to the prevailing ones and to the ones that are not working. And this is deliberate.

**Prem Shankar Jha:** I am a journalist and now with the 'Financial Express'. Anyway, the whole question that Mr Kothari has raised is of a crisis in the system. One may worry about this and I would like to share my thoughts with you. First of all, is it wise to talk about a system being in crisis too soon, too suddenly? How much does it show our own impatience, our fundamental lack of faith in the system we have adopted?

I happen to believe that there are very serious and disturbing trends and there is a short-term problem we face which is probably the most important one — which is the fact that major safeguards, constitutional safeguards, to the continuation of democracy are about to go and then it is ultimately a question only of political will without constitutional safeguards.

But that's another issue. I feel that it is easy to undervalue the system we have. The system has delivered the goods far more than Professor Kothari thinks. He said that we have been in trouble for the last 10 or 15 years. I wouldn't agree with that. If you use his own framework of analysis, the capacity of any system to cope with the problems of this country, to give adequate articulation to popular demand and the need for change, can only be seen in whether the system is absorbing social tension or



whether the indicators of social tension are rising. Whether you look at the incidence of communal violence or police firing or labour unrest, you will find that there was a very sharp rise in all these three indicators between let's say 1964 and 1971-72, but throughout the seventies you had all these indicators at a plateau with possibly a small decline in some of them, particularly police firing. The system is coping.

I mean industrialists may be very fed up with labour behaviour. But the fact is that in relation to the total number of people working in organised industry today, the incidence of strikes is lower than 1971 and there's no getting away from this. Alright. So I would say that we have a system which is remarkably flexible, which has delivered the goods so far.

Now, coming to the specific crisis of the disappearance of an alternative that Professor Kothari mentioned. Again, I think this is a question of impatience. First of all, let's look how the Janata was born. It was born in six weeks, of people who had been for 30 years in the opposition, and who were in opposition by choice. Suddenly, you bring these people together when there's a golden opportunity in the middle of an unprecedented crisis and they are able to form a government. They actually stuck it out for two-and-a-half years. If it ultimately broke, it was on something that most political factions understand, which is the raw struggle for power and accommodation. Forget all the moralising and the defectors, all the slogans that have been pushed around. I think this is really also a part of our political system.

On the economic front, we have done very badly but look at least at one thing we had in this economy — far more attention paid to the rural sector. There is a national sample survey which shows that between 1972 and 1977 rural unemployment actually declined. Now I do not know how valid this kind of study is. But it is in line with what we know about the second wave of the Green Revolution, about the way that freight has been provided to smaller marginal farmers. The fact that now 90 per cent of the wheat and 50 per cent of the paddy in this country comes from irrigated land, means it is just not a handful of kulaks who have got the tubewells. The mere fact that we talk about decentralisation and preventing employment displacement shows that our system is far more sensitive to popular demand and healthily sensitive than almost any other developing country that I know of. And I have been studying a few and I would say that there is a crisis which is economic, there is a crisis that we have no safeguards left and we have a whole lot of people in power who have once subverted democracy and we have to face this. That's true. But I would say the system is not breaking down.

**Bimal Prashad:** I think what we are discussing is a crisis of confidence, a crisis created by the behaviour pattern of politicians. Prem Shankar Jha referred to it as moralising. But it is not moralising, it is at the heart of the crisis because we have in our

country political leaders who don't feel bound down to any code of conduct and we have an electorate which is not bothered by it and there are some friends among the educated who think that these are matters of moralising only. It is really this issue which has led to the crisis. I don't agree with Professor Rajni Kothari's view that the crisis has been created by a lack of consensus on programmes. There is, in fact, a remarkable consensus on programmes. You can take the election manifestoes of various parties. You can compare the content of the speeches made by the political leaders. All are talking more or less about the same type of programme. So there is no lack of consensus on programmes. And when was there absolute agreement about programmes? What did the earlier consensus consist of? — the programme and policy adopted by the Congress Party under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, who was able to have a large majority in Parliament, who had a considerable following in the country and all of us have experienced his charisma, have enjoyed the sunshine of that charisma. But at that time there were other parties, other groups with different programmes, different policies, who felt that these policies and programmes were not going to lead to the desired result — whether it was economic, social or foreign policy.

However, there was, as I said, a broad consensus which is also present today. There is a government with a large majority. The elections have shown that. Some of us here may not be mesmerised by that charisma, but quite a large number of people in our country are and that's why they have ignored the negative aspects associated with it and have voted a certain person to power. So there is no lack of popular support and the Janata Party has declined and failed. But the Janata Party's programme did not offer such a big alternative to the Congress Party programme. You see, there was no greater consensus before than there is now — why disagreement today about programmes?

The real crisis is that in our country any political behaviour is pardonable if it is associated with success. Whoever has power, has charisma. You see, if a Chief Minister is overthrown, he is walking on the railway platform, nobody notices him but, in the meanwhile, a new Chief Minister has come and now he is visiting the various district headquarters and you see the charisma working. Elephants and guns and bands and what not, and it is this which works with our electorate, with our educated people, whatever the election result. You will pardon me for saying that after every election I have seen write-ups on the election results. And professors of political science and leading journalists have come out with this formula that our electorate has shown its maturity. This continuing maturity of our electorate is now with us. Therefore, political leaders are now not showing any regard for public opinion because, I think, a formula for elections has been found. Once in a while a mad man like J P may appear and disturb things. But normally the politicians have found the formula. That's why when the Janata leaders came to power, they



thought they had done so on their own, and nobody even cared to visit J.P. — those who visited, did not discuss politics because they thought they had found the formula

Of course, they were mistaken because as Prem Shankar Jha rightly said, they were suffering from various types of inner compulsions — and it might appear surprising that they stuck together — two-and-half-years now seems too long a period for them. However, I think if we understand this crisis, the major task in my opinion is the education of the electorate. They are our masters. Let's educate our masters. Until the electorate realises the significance of the vote, I don't think we are going to deal with the crisis. We have politicians who will change their parties six times in a year and their following will remain intact. It is on that basis that horse-trading and other things go on.

**Romesh Thapar.** I would like to make one point about these election manifestos. They are mostly written by intellectuals assisting politicians. Very few people read the manifestos in the political leadership and when it comes down to discussing the education of the electorate, precisely what are they to be educated on? Do you educate them on the traditional systems of power which Bimal Prasad had ably described? Do you educate them on the basis of what Rajni Kothari has said? — you have to begin a real re-structuring of the political and economic system in India. Or do you take the position that Prem Shankar Jha has taken that the system is really working and we are just mismanaging it. Let's bring the discussion into some focus.

**Vasant Bawa:** I am a fellow of the Gokhale Institute, formerly a civil servant. We have discussed the Agenda for India at a couple of small meetings in Poona and I wanted to mention the reactions. First of all, it seems to lay a lot of stress on formal structural changes in Centre-State relations, which, I think, is a secondary issue. Most of us feel that the real issue is what kind of economic and social structure do we want. If we don't know where we are going, then discussing the distribution of power between the Centre and the States is not going to get us anywhere because we don't know what the object of this redistribution is. In fact, there was quite a lot of discussion on the disadvantages of the proposal for reducing the size of States. Now, I gather that a lot of stress is being laid on equalising the size of States so that they will be able to balance and the Central Government will be forced to give assistance on an equitable basis to various States. After considerable discussion, many people felt that, for instance, in Maharashtra, perhaps, more could be given to Vidharba and Marathwada from the wealth of Bombay than by the Centre if they were separate States. In other words, there's also the proposal for metropolitan city States like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Delhi which would have advantages as well as disadvantages because economic strength would concentrate in those areas. So, I think the main discussion should be on the economic and social structures to-

wards which we are working. Here, I think we should look at the new models of appropriate technology or alternative technology which has been worked out quite a lot in the Third World discussions in the last few years and is also largely embodied in a number of articles in *Alternatives* which have been brought out by Rajni Kothari.

The second point which I want to make is that we have stressed democratic institutions and the preservation of the rule of law and freedom of the press and so on. This is all very good but one basic point which none of us seems to want to face is to what extent do we observe these values which we wish government to observe or the ministry or the top people in industry.

For example, can a lecturer in a university challenge the Vice-Chancellor even when he is in the right and the Vice-Chancellor is in the wrong? How does he go about challenging him? Can a working journalist challenge an editor? If we allow so much of power and strength to a top man in a profession, do we have any right to criticise the people outside the profession who are interfering in that profession?

In other words, what I am arguing for is a kind of professional approach, a re-structuring of relations within the professions so that a new code of conduct emerges. We all know how it (the present code) works in our own professions. So I am wondering whether we shouldn't turn the searchlight inwards and try to draw up codes of conduct for ourselves and then try to draw up codes of conduct for politicians.

**Soli Sorabji:** I am a lawyer by profession and in my spare time I listen to jazz music.

Now I don't think I have much to say about the political, economic system because there are others who are much more competent and able to do that. But there is one thing which has been bothering me, and bothering me quite a bit — the crisis overtaking the judiciary. I will give you one example. In Bombay, some time in 1975 in the thick of the Emergency some lawyers wanted to hold a meeting to discuss issues of civil liberty. The Police Commissioner, as was customary, passed some mindless order just declining permission. Now, in the thick of the Emergency, lawyers and those who wanted to hold the meeting were confident, were enthusiastic about approaching a court of law. They did approach a court of law, and it can be said to the credit of the Bombay High Court that it struck down the order. Today, there is no Emergency. Today, the powers of the courts are not curbed. Today, the constitutional provisions, amendments made by the Janata Government, on the contrary, ensure freedom, independence of the judiciary and make it more difficult for the imposition of an emergency. But today despite that position, clients and lawyers do not have the same confidence nor enthusiasm to approach a court of law. I just can't understand this and that is why I am here on the rostrum before you when you discuss constitutional and



administrative issues. I do not understand why, despite constitutional provisions to ensure the independence of the judiciary, do we have adulatory letters to the leaders of the day? Why do we have judges just not bothering about whether the withdrawal of a certain prosecution is justified or is patently collusive? What has happened? What are the pressures which are operating? Are they invisible? Are they unwritten? Do they operate on some other level? If so, let's identify them and let's try and eliminate them. Even though the nation is always cynical about the judiciary, but for it many of the things which happened during the Emergency and many of the meetings and forums held would have been difficult, because civil liberties do not defend themselves. Apart from lawyers who are willing to go to a court of law, ultimately you require bold judicial attitudes.

There is another point which I would like you very seriously to think about. A great danger looms on the horizon. There are going to be seven vacancies in the Supreme Court. It was not long ago that we heard the pernicious doctrine of committed judges. In a sentence, committed judges means committed to the policy of the government in power at that time. Friends, unless public opinion is mobilised today, and not after an appointment is made of a committed judge, unless you host seminars and debates and discussions and be very clear about the criteria which should be adopted for the appointment of judges, it may be too late.

**Rajmohan Gandhi** (journalist from Bombay)

I am afraid I am one of those who would prefer a very old-fashioned expression to describe the crisis and call it, above all, an ethical crisis, a crisis of character. I feel that in today's atmosphere we have to turn to something within us for any hope at all. I am sure Prem Shankar Jha's statistics can show some slight improvement in different fields. But on the whole there are very few circles of hope, or circles of excellence, circles of efficiency, anywhere in the country around us.

Personally, I am very hopeful about this get-together and despite Romesh's injunction against compliment, I feel there is something to be glad about the convening of this group. I only feel that it is essential for us to try and ensure that we don't make the errors the politicians of one group have disgusted the country with. The very simple thing that Prem referred to as the raw struggle for power was what certainly broke the Janata Party and made us all exceedingly unhappy. I think the problem of the challenge before us is to see if we cannot give to our country, our masters, the electorate, the servants that they need. We have got to educate them, yes. But we have also to give them some instruments to work with. If there are no circles of hope, no circles of excellence, no circles of efficiency in the country around us, do we or do we not consider whether we should not try to give those circles to the country? And how are we going to ensure that in our group at least there is going to be a great reduction in the clash of egos which have so exasperated our country.

Another thing concerns me and I think Bawa touched upon it. To be specific, Romesh referred to the agreement about democratic values and distributive justice. But I would like us to try if we can specify what our commitment to these two values should mean in our own life. If the poverty in our country concerns us, what is it that this should mean in our life? Should it mean a reduction in our life style? If so, what kind? Is there a voluntary limit we place on our expenditure? Is there a limit to be placed on the area in which we live? Nor am I sure that those things are necessarily going to work. We may reach the conclusion that we can't make a code of that kind, and that ultimately what we want is something that is less tangible, something more a matter of the spirit, of our whole attitude to culture. But if so, let's be clear on that, but I myself am not clear in my own mind. Part of me says we must have a very specific tangible code of conduct for those who say we want to show something new to the country. We must show it in our life, as Gandhiji did.

But to return to another specific point, I would like to see whether or not we encourage the formation of bodies all over the country, beginning at the village level, the town level, district level, State level, where we reserve the right of political action. We conduct the activity of political education and may be demonstrate somehow in the quality of our discussion, in the quality of our activity that unity, that honesty, that commitment to India rather than to oneself of which Romesh spoke?

**G.P. Deshpande:** I teach at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Two or three points I will try to make as briefly as possible.

First is something which has been left out so far in the discussions, as also in the Agenda — that nearly one-third of India is already under the rule of the army — something which we have only now perhaps taken note of, presumably because we look towards the West and the North all the time and the East we leave out of our own considerations. In fact, the two languages in which this Agenda is going to be translated, to begin with, are also western Indian languages — Marathi and Gujarati. So the East somehow gets left out, so to speak, and the East has been virtually under various degrees of army rule. People are being shot at — this has happened to one-third of India and it is only a question of time when it happens to the rest of us. I think we will have to face this fact quite squarely and it is a sensitive area.

Presumably, one has always been talking about the North-Eastern people in terms of strategy because there are powers to the north of them, powers to the east of them, powers to the south of them and so on. But I think there is basically a human issue, an issue of democracy involved and let us begin with this understanding that one-third of India is under the rule of the army. I do not know whether it began in 1964 or whether it began in 1971 but it is something



far more serious than, shall we say, how Supreme Court judges are appointed.

The second point that I wish to make is that let us not run down the people of India straightaway because I do not think they have let down the politicians. It is the other way round. Wherever there has been an alternative which for right or wrong reasons, people in certain parts of the country thought was able to stand up, it has been voted back and back again into power — even after certain very powerful people have taken over the government of New Delhi. There is a certain value to be placed on this opinion. There can be many amongst us who may not like the kind of alternatives that are being thrown up. But that is not the point I am trying to make. I am not recommending one alternative or the other. We are keeping politics luckily out of this, luckily or unluckily maybe.

I would again join issue with only one small sentence in the paper which, in a sense, hurts because, after all, we are under-valuing the people of this country. There has been no lack of the credibility of the system so far. If at all, there has been lack of credibility of a certain political party. That has certainly happened. But wherever there was a viable alternative, people have voted for it. What are they going to do, for example, in UP and Madhya Pradesh or for that matter in Maharashtra? No matter, how much we wish it the other way round, the kind of non-government people were given, they had no choice but to go on shuffling.

And there is no choice. I mean they simply cannot one fine morning by rubbing Alladin's lamp create an alternative leadership. There is simply no political leadership. So there is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that people have behaved either ignorantly or because they have not understood the great values promulgated by the 1974 movement. They have. In fact, it is precisely against those values that these leaders have been judged and found unfit but where else do the people go? And therefore they have brought certain people back to power whom personally I don't like. The people of India do react to values, to performance, to rising prices. Somebody is supposed to have said in the 19th century that in certain kinds of democracy you have no choice but to choose your oppressors. I am not saying that that should be the case or is bound to be the case. What I am saying is that tragically that is the case? People have chosen quite consciously a certain set of oppressors because they discovered that those who rode the high tide of certain values also were oppressors of a kind.

The third point that I wish to make is that against these rising expectations, people are being shot down all over the place, the army ruling one-third of India, people having no choice, nowhere to go. We should not be talking in terms of legality, in terms of what size a State should be, what size a district should be. It is not a question of sizes. After all, Haryana is one of the smallest States and nobody's ideal politi-

cian has been produced by Haryana. If anything quite the contrary.

There is another point which we also have to take into account. When you are going to split things in two, you will also be launching forces of chauvinism all the way through, because after all let us not forget that just as selfishness is real, just as corruption is real in this country, just as the people's caste loyalties are real, chauvinism is real. I mean this would be hardly the time to start that sort of thing. We have a certain unit given to us. And I just do not see how the size of that particular unit or this particular unit makes it possible for a more people-oriented leadership to be in power. The fact of the matter is that there is no people-oriented leadership and related to this point is that it is not enough to be democratic in this country. Given its poverty, given its savagery, one will have to have some kind of socialism going with it.

Of course, one can define socialism, one can go into this discussion. What is socialism, what is not socialism? I only say that if you take a position of pure liberal democracy in this country, somebody else is going to walk away with socialism and with the people of this country, which is what has been happening ever since the 60s and 70s. Everybody simply has to stand up and give his version of socialism, the manifesto ..

**Narayan Desai:** I work in the Rashtriya Lok Samiti. I think perhaps we are too conservative in trying to preserve the *status quo* of the soft State. If we want change then we must be prepared to bring change in our own lives. I don't mean we should become sadhus or sanyasis but we should at least have the means by which to communicate with our people whom we wish to serve. I am pleased that we are not going to discuss the original paper because it was written before the last election result and it now stands refuted. But we still have to think about the future before us; the coming authoritarian forces and how we can save our people from its terrors — either through changes in the Constitution or the Judiciary. Perhaps the people will be able to find their own way. I feel that the political leaders with whom we all are dissatisfied — those who win the elections or lose them, have bad goals or good goals, or are pure selfish — manage to communicate with the ordinary people. We don't and if we can't manage to, we will lose the race. Therefore, I appeal to you to discuss in this session how we can get our ideas across to the mass of the people.

**Dev Dutt:** I think I am a sort of journalist. I would like to raise two questions before we go further. The micro part of the larger developments which are taking place in India and the specificities of the micro situations which are developing and which are changing qualitatively the macro structures. There is no doubt about the break up of a consensus in the ruling elite for various reasons — personality clashes, socio-economic interests. And it does constitute a symptom of the problem. But, there is also a break up in the



rules of the game. The Lok Sabha electoral system shows that the basic rules of the game which were generally accepted by the ruling elite are not being followed in practice. All of us have a stereo-type of what is the legislature-based person, what is an MP, what is an MLA? To my mind P. G. Mavalankar is the stereo-type of an MP. But if you go down to the present specificity, that archetype is broken. Now there is a homespun-type of legislator who has arrived and, cumulatively, the recruitment to the legislative bodies has qualitatively changed because of the new entrants. On the one hand there can be a Mani Ram Bagri and on the other a P. G. Mavalankar. Both are MPs, but the functionality is more important. In fact, there is a general disfunctionality taking place all over. Maybe, people have simply got used to such abnormalities.

A few years ago, we were not used to the absence of the rule of law, today we and the system are assimilating it. And the point which I want to take up is that from 1885 to 1980, three instrumentalities have changed. First, a movement arose like the Congress, through parliamentary institutions it became a party, India became free. Now it is 100 years since that institutional framework of a movement, a party getting into power, making use of power to change the system came into being. That has exhausted itself. It is not functioning. The second type of movement was like Gandhi started of constructive programme work from 1920 onwards. India became free. Constructive work continued and then there was a party, there is a structure — the Sarva Sewa Sangh. It is fond of buildings, cement, steel, the amount of money required and the interest over it. It has done good work, but it has got stuck there. It is disfunctional in relation to its original purpose. Another type of movement like the RSS started in 1920. It grew and now has a large number of members. But it has got bogged down on organisation. It is creating problems for itself. It is part of the exhaustion. Therefore, I do feel that the instrumentalities have changed whether in the micro or general level. In the present Parliament, if one natural accident takes place and Mrs Gandhi dies, where is the executive framework? What is the process of recruitment to these bodies which you say we have assimilated. Okay, the system is alright. This country has survived 4,000 years. But that's not the point. The point is, where are the sources of real assistance? The sources of ruin in the system are drawing up and how do we renew them? What is the linkage with the changes which are taking place in the mother society and the instruments which are meant to communicate, which are meant to make use of change or at least to project those changes.

My submission is that these types of instruments have no relation to the rock bottom changes which are taking place at the ground level. I become an MP and I say people voted for me because I am a Socialist. What is the consciousness at which the people have voted for me? I just interpret it. The mandates are interpreted. So the process by which I come to power and the fact of my come-back has no linkage. This brings me to another point. Someone

said: 'Oh, we have assimilated many tensions here'. But, have you solved the problem of language? People have got normalised to English which is much sought after today. In Ahmedabad, the city of Gandhi, I saw a queue starting at 2.30 at night for admission to an English-medium school asking for English. So which are the problems you have really finally solved? My submission is that in this system we have problems, we have tried to solve them, but not a single major national problem remains solved in a manner that it creates new problems. And lastly, it is very well to say the system is growing. But those people who are outside the system, who do not contribute to production and do not share the productive system, where are they? They are knocking at the door and the system cannot respond to them, nor can it share with them the fruits of development, nor can it allow them to part with it. There is a problem. Let's not say that it can be assimilated.

**Nirmal Bose:** I am a college teacher from the University of Calcutta. Unfortunately for me, apart from being an academician, I am a politician. I am a Left Front MLA in West Bengal. And much has been spoken against the politicians. I agree with those who say that the crisis is basically an ethical crisis. In the draft, it has been suggested that what we are lacking today is principled politics. I also agree with many that politicians, by and large, don't follow principles. But is it a fact that only politicians are responsible for this situation? There is criticism that the intellectuals of our country — teachers, journalists, lawyers, writers — are even now taking an 'ivory tower' attitude in respect of many problems. And sometimes they also take a stand which cannot be conceded as principled.

I can give an example. There are friends here who are with me in the Indian Political Science Association. In 1976, immediately after the Emergency, we were meeting in Jodhpur for our annual conference. One of the subjects for discussion was 'Challenges to the Indian political system'. Most of the members there, distinguished teachers of political science in universities and colleges, wrote papers eulogising the Emergency. They suggested it was good for democracy in India, secularism, socialism and economic development. The next year, in December '77, we were meeting in Bangalore for a similar conference. One of the subjects was: 'Elections in India in 1977'. The same group of teachers, barring a few, again wrote papers suggesting that the Emergency was very bad, Mrs Gandhi was very bad. There is a very distinguished journalist in my city who wrote a big volume after the Emergency saying Mrs Gandhi was bad, the Emergency was bad. And after the elections this year, he started writing again that Mrs Gandhi is very good, Congress (I) has come to save India. Is that principle? So what is necessary whether in politics or any other sphere, is that we follow some principles, some morals. If there is any departure from that, we must step down. Otherwise we are doomed.

My second point is that there are many things mentioned in the Agenda for India on which there



can be broad consensus. But there are other points over which there may be differences. So it is necessary to locate issues on which there can be general consensus. To my mind the greatest is that of democracy which is in danger today. I agree with Soli Sorabji that at present on paper everything is alright. The Constitution is there, provisions are there, liberty is there, but why this pervasive fear complex? Judges are afraid, journalists barring a few exceptions, are afraid, teachers are afraid. Members within the ruling party are afraid. I know; I have many friends within the Congress(I) Party who are not courageous enough to speak out their minds. If this continues, what is the future of democracy? So, there should be a broad-based platform for democracy on which there would be a broad consensus. But although I agree that what is needed today is a change in social and economic structures, these are matters many of us would not be able to agree upon. So, let us concentrate on the democratic content.

And my last point is this. The process of disintegration has started. We are for a united India. But what is going on in Assam? It is not the question of foreigners alone. It is not the question of conflict between Assamese-speaking people and the people speaking in Bengali, Nepali, Oriya or Hindi languages. It is a question of the integration of India. The moot point here is whether any Indian citizen can reside in any part of India with full rights. So any gathering which is for democracy, for any welcome change, must take up this issue and fight for it.

**Attar Singh:** I teach at Punjab University, Chandigarh. The morning session has given us the feeling that we are caught up in a situation of crisis. It has been variously described as a breakdown of consensus, a crisis of character, crisis of faith, crisis of confidence and so forth. It is perhaps symptomatic of our situation that the document which has been circulated by the steering committee, failed to anticipate what is happening in Assam, in West Bengal and now even in Bihar, that no reference was made to the tendencies of the political fragmentation of India. Will we have an India to talk about in the next decade or so? This failure of the document to take cognisance of things happening there arises from a failure of establishing communication with the reality of India.

We have talked about the crisis of communication in the context of our failure to reach the masses. But we have not talked about the crisis of communication in the sense that we have not been able to build channels through which to get information on the reality of India. Somehow or the other, we have a feeling of smugness about our role as writers, journalists, thinkers or whatever. As the prophets of India, we have a message to convey. We don't have any message to receive and this crisis of communication derives from the fact that there is no source of feedback on the reality of India that is available to us.

When we take a closer look, we find that this

channel has not been built because of the hierarchical set-up. On the top are the English-knowing people who aspire to become well known at international level looking at India from the vantage points of an outsider so that its reality can be presented to those outside as amusing or entertaining. The second level is covered by the Hindi writers and intellectuals who, in their arrogance, believe that they represent India, they are the national writers. And a third round is of the writers and intellectuals in regional languages, who write only for people speaking their language. They behave differently in two different situations; when they meet at national level, they talk of common things. But when they go down to the local level, they talk of the problems of their own people and they feed the sort of chauvinism of which we were talking to the eternal shame of the functioning of our system during the last 30 years. The fact that in Assam many people of Indian origin were murdered, their women molested, their houses burnt for the sin of speaking in a language different to Assamese is not fully understood. The situation has come to boiling point simply because we have not been able to understand the aspirations of the people there, the tensions which are building up at cultural level between different communities. We have not been able to solve the national question of India and unless we do, I believe that all talk about democracy and other correctives will be totally irrelevant. If foreign powers are taking interest in that situation, it does not take away our responsibility for having created that situation in the first instance.

Similar situations are arising all over India and I think the basic cause has been trying to solve the situation from above rather than from down below. We have never tried to find out what the people live for, fight for, what motivates them.

I will end by saying that it will be worthwhile to send the members of the Steering Committee at least to Assam, to West Bengal, to even Bihar, to find out what are the sources of the alienation of vast masses speaking Assamese, or Bengali or Bihari or whatever language it is, from what we call the national mainstream and what challenges and what dangers are inherent in this situation which is, assuming threatening proportions.

**Romesh Thapar:** Two members have visited Assam but their deliberations have not been reflected in the document. That will be explained in the political section.

**Inder Mohan:** During the last few years I have been trying to educate myself as much or as little as possible by associating myself with those who live in slums or in backward rural areas. So, I just want to raise a couple of points. When one lives among those who today happen to be 70 per cent of the population and live below the poverty line, talk to them about rising prices and all attitude is one of cynicism. 'For us prices have always been high ever since 1947...' 'I can afford to have one meal a day...' So with reg.



these prices and availability of essential items, what concrete answer can we give to them.

My second point is: does any legislation exist for those who are Harijans and own no land and work for other landlords or for those who are brick kiln workers or farm labourers. If at all there is, why is it that in the last 32 years they are not even today aware of the Acts passed in their name. If something does exist, why hasn't even a fraction of that been implemented?

My third point is that for how long will these people continue to live in unlivable shanties, amidst filth and squalor all the time? Can we tell them something concrete about this?

And, lastly, my question is how is it that in spite of all the misery that prevails a certain amount of assertiveness is developing, may be regional feelings can be transformed into a healthy federal republic for our country, but that's a different matter. My question is why is it that the politicians get away with all the tall, false and empty promises on the basis of popular slogans. And if we can provide some answer to this and convey it to our people, we would have achieved quite a bit.

**Kishore Saint:** I am working in Udaipur with a voluntary organisation in the field of adult education and rural development mainly with groups of the rural poor. Well, my idea of crisis emanates from understanding the perceptions, the experience of those people and listening to what has been said this morning, I have been trying to weigh in my mind whether it is the democratic system that is in crisis or is the crisis related to the progressively deteriorating situation of those we call the poor. I don't know what these figures of 40 per cent, 50 per cent, 70 per cent, mean. But when we sit with some of these groups, we raise two questions. Firstly, 'Is your condition today better than that of your forefathers?' Secondly: 'Is the condition of your children going to be better than yours today?' The answer 'our condition is worse than that of our parents in terms of land, of food, of the quality of food and in terms of the future of the children.'

If these pockets of the poor add up to 70 per cent of the people, then I don't think much imagination is needed to see what the future is going to be. This whole problem is of the progressive pauperisation of these people year by year, in their lives and in their environment. Every year more trees are absent, there is less land to be had, etc., etc. Can our present system manage this. I think that's what we should come to grips with. We have a system, a way of being governed, a Constitution. Judging from its performance over the last 30 years, can it deliver the goods? I know it may be very difficult for a group like this which is well placed, comfortable. We have our organisations, our institutions, we have a place in the system even when we are dissidents and rebels. Now, outside this system there is that mass. We hint

at changes at the bottom, etc. But I don't know whether we have any inkling of the storm that is brewing. In 10 or 15 years, no system which is as lackadaisical as ours is going to be able to stand the fury of that emerging storm. Perhaps, as someone quoting the historian, AGB Taylor, recently said that we will only know the crisis when people in front of our eyes begin to fall dead with hunger, with disease or through just murdering each other. But it is somewhat satisfying that this has become part of the consciousness of the elite. But only when it gets down into the guts will we understand.

**H K Paranjape:** I am a research worker in political economy. May I start by reiterating what some friends have already said. While one can't blame a document which is six months old for certain omissions, it is a little disconcerting to think that the constitutional structure is the main issue facing the country today and if changes are made formally in the Constitution, the problems will diminish. I am afraid this is exactly what is wrong with much of our thinking. Rajni mentioned that the country was progressing in the right direction while Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership existed — things began to go wrong only after that. I wonder whether that is not itself the beginning of our illusion. Wasn't the acceptance of linguistic provinces to enable the people to participate in the working of the administration opposed by Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai soon after Independence? Wasn't that an indication of the way the elite approach dominated those who took over power and continues to dominate us even today. By and large, all our working continues in English and goes against any possibility of people's participation in administration or government, in industry or business. Beyond a certain limit, if you don't know English, you are out. We have done nothing about that? Even systems like Yugoslavia can work in five languages — a far smaller country.

The next point that I would like to mention is that we cannot ignore the fact that we are not, perhaps, going to have the time to bring about the changes that we consider necessary. How many of you feel confident that in a year's time we will be able to assemble like this and discuss matters. Have we the choice of opting for the kind of democratic framework that the document sets out? Isn't it going to be a choice between some kind of fascism and some kind of communism with all the dice loaded in favour of fascism? Is there any element, any group, any organisation, any force which can stop this approaching Jagannath's chariot today. How do we avoid being oppressed by feelings of terror? Through better appointments to the Supreme Court?

It is true that in a society there always are elites, but at least a section of the elites must not give in. In Hindu philosophy some Varuna will consider it its *dharma* to stand steadfast by the fundamentals of the system. The Brahmins were supposed to do that even though the Vaishyas and Kshatriyas did something different. Where are the Brahmins of our society? All the Brahmins have become or aspire to



be Kshatriyas or Vaishyas In which case who stands steadfast for basic values?

**Bhagwan Dass** I am by profession a lawyer but I edit a paper and my one speciality is that I was born in an untouchable family and worked among them and shall continue to do so

People have referred to crises of various kinds We feel that basically the problem is a crisis of character, because it is not the Constitution which governs our destiny, but religion Whether Hindus, Christians or Muslims, religion influences the behaviour of the people, reaching where the written word doesn't The crisis was summarised in one sentence by Dr Ambedkar in one of his books while discussing the great men of India He said the trouble with Indians was that instead of actualising an ideal they try to idealise the actual. So we don't try to elevate ourselves and we are not introspective. We are led by slogans which have a dazzling effect. And we fall for the charismatic personality and abdicate our intelligence That happened when Nehru was in power and it happened later when other powerful personalities seized power

We have seen that at the lower level people have a cynical view They are critical, they are disgusted, but they don't have a voice and like the British, the press only sees the problems from the top The elite theorise or give news in a sensational manner They don't have the patience, the time or the background to allow the people to study what they really feel. So that's one factor responsible for wrong information and on that wrong information, they form their theory and prescribe certain cures. This I request the organisers of this function to keep in view Now, on the untouchables, something has been said in the document, and most people here will be guided by that I know Kuldip Nayar wrote once about the discriminatory sort of reservations in India But you have never had the opportunity to know what untouchables feel about it. It is said that it has done them no good I, as an untouchable born, say it has done enormous good even if it has not reached the illiterate masses There are many other benefits introduced by the Constitution which have not reached the masses but have done good and only we from our side can tell you the good it (reservation) has done But many excuses are being found to obliterate it, to make it ineffective or even to abolish it

Finally, the main thing we suffer from here is that whatever we write doesn't reach the people What does reach? It's a charismatic personality with enormous resources at its disposal, with a helicopter, cars or other modes of transport She or he reaches the masses It's the radio which reaches, television which reaches It's a Brahmin who reaches It's the exploiter who reaches, the money-lender who reaches and we have very little feedback in India So that's the main thing, how to reach to the people who really deserve it? And their number is phenomenal If we don't then we are sitting on something like the earth A hard crust 60 miles deep and underneath, molten

lava This lava might erupt like a volcano and volcanoes are no respectors of persons

**Romesh Thapar:** I just like to mention that, you know, Rajmohan's brother Ram Chander deals with philosophy. He was raising this question with me when we were preparing this document And he said how will it reach the people and he had, I think, a fantastic idea He suggested that we take the simplest element of a printing machine which is a treadle. We simplify it even further, make it absolutely serviceable within a village and put one treadle into every village and let the people express themselves as they want All they need is some paper, some ink and, you know, foot power and he believed that would be the genuine communication revolution in this country. And I really believe that unless we shake ourselves down to that kind of thinking we will not be able to communicate.

**Rami Chhabra:** I am a free-lance journalist. I handle a communication project with the Family Planning Foundation and I write columns for two of the national newspapers on women and social issues. One of the things I wanted to stress is that the crisis is really a crisis of character It is a crisis of value systems It is a question of hypocrisy, where society looks at spiritual values and worships gross materialism, where we talk of socialism but in our own personal life lead extremely feudal existences Just this morning there has been a manifestation of this very double thing right here We talked about educating our masters. The whole phrase itself is contradictory First of all, if they are our masters what need of educating them. And secondly what are we going to educate them about? I would like to question whether the institutions are really equipped to handle their jobs I am by no means trying to belittle them but when we talk about the media, the judiciary, I do respect what Soli Sorabji has said about manning the judiciary with the right kind of people. But who are they? The so-called objective judges have pronounced on the Mathura case Are they taking into consideration the true needs of the whole of the society In the media, just this morning my column was censored because of certain allegations I made against leading media males and what they had to say on the women's issue

I know that the Agenda for India is not up for discussion But there are major lacunas in it, which are fundamental The document lists all kinds of categories but leaves out women which are a little less than half the population of this country. It cannot possibly speak for the people The population issue is dealt with in narrow political and narrow economic terms Yet, it is a major human rights issue These issues are not being taken up in a spirit in which they should be.

**V M Tarkunde** I work in Citizens for Democracy. I am also an advocate Now I want to say that any attempt to start from structural changes, from the government is essentially an elitist approach



It is not merely a question of wanting to know what people want. We have got to be the teachers of the people as well. That's why we should not be in party politics because that usually represents the peoples' backwardness also. We must tell people what is the basic fact of Indian history, namely, that they must stand on their own legs and improve their lot. That I think is a matter which is of the greatest moment. Otherwise, how do we explain the last election? For 19 months we had the experience of the Emergency. People were put into jail. Our entire press was gagged. There was no rule of law. There was an atmosphere of fear throughout the country. In spite of that, after two-and-a-half years when the Janata Government failed, the same people have come to power again. Is it not, whatever one might say, really a lack of maturity? I mean what's the use of praising our people? No teacher can do that. He or she must say 'You are wrong there and try to improve the ' And it's no use, therefore, hiding the fact that although we might have a large measure of maturity compared to the Third World, we do require to generate the spirit of democracy in the country. This must be propagated and people organised accordingly, maybe into people's committees. That's the real type of work, not merely structural changes? Corruption will only go when people know their rights and fight for them. Any problem, whether it is political concentration of power, economic backwardness or morality, it ultimately goes back to the people themselves.

I only want to say one or two words about the problem raised by Soli Sorabji. Many of us thought that in the case of the re-emergence of a dictatorial regime, the resistance would be greater than in 1975. But today we find it less. I think it is less because it was expected that Indira Gandhi would behave in the way she has when she came to power. And therefore people are really lost.

I will give you another instance. For years we have been fighting that radio and television be placed under independent control. Within weeks of this government's coming to power, the Minister of Information & Broadcasting stated that radio and television were not to be placed under independent control. Now this statement really goes against our demand for the last 15 to 20 years. But, who has protested? How many? Why not? Because this was expected. I think it will take another two years for the people to get disillusioned about this government. The government will try again to curb the liberties of the people. That will be the time of testing for us. Meanwhile, unless we establish some links with the masses and try to impart our values to them, (we want freedom, they also want freedom and they want to stand on their own legs) I think our problems will not be solved.

**Vijay Pratap:** I belong to a 'non-electoral' socialist organisation, learning and applying socialist ideology. I think the main discussion here is whether we should teach the people or they should teach us. In my opinion Indira Gandhi is going to

amend the Constitution — and if she were to consult the gathering here, we would in the preamble dedicate the Constitution to ourselves and to the people of India. Whether we learn or we teach the people implies that we are a class apart — the intellectuals. Experience elsewhere shows that most intellectuals rationalise the powers that be. I am not suggesting that this is the case here. But I want to say that in India there has been a stream of thought in which there was no separation between democracy and distributive justice. This was Gandhiji's, where man was considered a man. His weapon was satyagraha which involved each man directly, personally. Among Marxists, it's the Polit Bureau from the top that decides what is counter revolutionary or not — under that direction the whole economic and social structure of the country could have been changed. But if you want change democratically, through decentralisation and people's participation, then you can only do it through satyagraha. After Gandhiji's leadership of satyagraha, it was only Lohia who took this instrument seriously — his only mistake was to think of himself as the owner of it. He did try to interpret Gandhiji but wherever he drifted away from him, the socialist movement suffered. I am not a member of any party, I am not an intellectual or political activist, but I would like to ask the very followers of Gandhiji and satyagraha, the Gandhi Peace Foundation and the Institute etc., how they have themselves become anti-satyagraha. Comfortable jobs have taken away all the revolutionary impetus. The one fundamental left in the socialist movement at the level of ideas is decentralisation — E M S's dissenting note on Panchayati Raj is interesting because when the Socialist Party had originally suggested the four tier approach, both Nehru and the communists thought that this was an attempt to break the nation. What I want to end with is that if we wish to renew the stream of satyagraha we as intellectuals must also sacrifice something of our life and living.

## POLITICAL

**Bashiruddin Ahmed:** The discussion this morning, I think, was useful. Some of the ideas and sentiments expressed have a bearing on what I am going to talk about this afternoon. We have called this a session for political issues. Obviously, it will not be possible to consider all issues. In fact, I intend to focus essentially on what we have called in the document, structural changes in the political system. You cannot run a society like ours on the basis of a permanent satyagraha. Nor can you really hope to create through clowning or other procedures or processes little Gandhis. Even making men more moral or ensuring that they behave in a better fashion ethically, is ultimately a matter of creating institutions. And that's why this section is very important. We went into it with one thing in our mind, namely, the recognition of the fact that we must have a viable and effective national authority. Without that you just cannot run this system. Also, successively we have seen this as being the main malady of our politics. Mrs Gandhi came in 1971, with a massive majority. Although she eventually was pushed out of office in



the election of 77, there is ample data to show that within a matter of a year or two, her credibility and support had been eroded. Then came the Janata and we tend to think that Janata went the way it did essentially because it was a coalition of groups, which couldn't hang together and that if we get a single party with a strong leader, that will not happen again. But I submit to you that Janata went because of what had happened earlier and Mrs Gandhi will have difficulty again. And this is because, as the document says, major changes have occurred on the ground. We have referred to the coming into polity in a major assertive fashion of the middle class. We have talked about the Harijans asserting themselves. Also, we have talked about the new sensibility. May be, not everyone in this country is committed to all kinds of political values. But today you have a critical mass large enough to say that this is the kind of style that we will not accept. We will not accept arbitrariness. We will not accept politics of patronage. We will not accept sectionalism.

This critical mass was responsible for what happened to the Congress(I) government earlier, to the Janata Government in 1980 and what might well happen to the present one. We believe that if a viable strong effective Centre is to be established, then we must attend to the task of creating viable, effective structures at the bottom. We have seen that as a result of concentration of authority, the crisis which developed at the grass roots, affects the Centre as well. Therefore, it is essential that we should create viable, effective systems of government right from the village level upwards. That is why we talk of more powers to the districts and the States. In our early stages as an independent State, the historical need was the need to have a strong Centre. But, even then, in spite of a strong Centre, Nehru's style allowed people who could get things done to emerge and create their own support base. B C Roy, Pratap Singh Karon, Kamaraj and a whole lot of others emerged at the State level. This is how Nehru struck a balance between the constitutional arrangement and political management of the system. Right now, the need is to return to that kind of arrangement. And, of course, we can no longer leave these matters to the preferences of individual leaders. They have to become part of institutional arrangements. Now G.P. Deshpande is absolutely right in saying that merely making States small would not solve many of our problems. Of course not. In fact, that is only part of the set of recommendations. And, even these recommendations form part of a whole package of things. This package is incomplete. Obviously, you cannot look at various aspects of this document in isolation.

We have all talked of social transformation, of poverty, unemployment and untouchability and I have heard here this morning observations which contradict each other. We have been told politicians are bad, intellectuals are bad because they don't communicate with the people and then we have also been told that people themselves are bad because they get the leaders they deserve. So, I think it is essential

to understand that if you want to bring about social transformation, that certainly is not going to be brought by us here. We are not the people to bring it about. And let us not depend for social transformation on sporadic movements or on a 'J P'. We want it to occur through existing institutions on a permanent basis essentially through decentralisation. Then we are talking of more power, more resources to the districts and to the villages. Indeed, there is the empirical fact that decentralisation has led to power and resources being used by dominant groups, that political power by itself is not enough. Those who hold economic power matter, and they control political power. But let me also remind you that power has several bases and one important basis of power is numbers. We have seen over 30 years that because of numbers even groups who do not have economic power have been able to assert themselves. After all, the conflict that we hear about, the conflagrations that take place in rural areas — the burning of Harijan huts — is an evidence of this assertion on the part of the deprived and the poor. To argue that unless their economic conditions change, we should not decentralise power is, to my mind, a very negative position to take. It is like General Ayub and Zia saying about Pakistan, namely, that 'our people are uneducated, you cannot give them freedom, you cannot give them democracy. Let them be educated and they will have both'.

And, finally, one last point which I want to make is that we talk of decentralisation also because we find it is now necessary to have institutional safeguards for our freedom. So far, our freedom, our liberties, have really been a gift of the elite. The nature of the elite has changed, is changing and we don't want to be dependent on it. We want institutional arrangements which protect our freedom and our rights. And one way of doing this is, of course, to go to the Constitution. But I am afraid the Constitution is much less of a safeguard than democratic institutions. I am totally aware of the fact that today when we talk of these changes, we are not talking on the basis of the assumption that we can influence people at the top or at the bottom. We have certain preferences and we want to place those preferences before whoever is willing to listen. This is all.

As a result of the inability of the national governments to handle or cope with the problems which emerge as a result of change, a lot of distrust has crept into the system. I think Paranjape was right that today we are talking in a very different context. This has been created by the ineptitude; maybe by design of the elite, of the Congress, the Janata, the lot. The distortion is such that my fear is that we are on the brink of a major catastrophe politically. Perhaps if we do not assert ourselves, we do not state our preferences, we may reach a point where we may have a system which is a cross between Liberia and Indonesia. Thank you.

**Girilal Jain** I am a journalist. You know, I was reluctant to speak because I found the discussion out



of focus There is no focus I don't blame the participants In my opinion, a focus is just not possible in the given situation in this country. Now Bashir has spoken about the need to decentralise power. But what do you decentralise when there is no power to decentralise We are, in my opinion, facing a crisis of authority It is absurd to talk of a strong Centre now We can have a crude, cruel arbitrary Centre. In my opinion, we do not have a strong Centre Nobody has ever suggested that iron is stronger than steel Steel is much stronger because it is flexible

You see, there is really a problem of leadership and for the last 11 years I have seen this problem being discussed in terms of one individual which I regard an expression of our intellectual bankruptcy. The problem is much deeper I don't know where to begin discussion of this You know, there is constant reference to the Nehru era What were the characteristics of the Nehru era? An English-educated elite, well-versed with the British ways of democracy and broadly accepting the same norms Then, within that Nehru era we saw, as a result of the introduction of adult franchise and many other changes, the rise of a new elite within that elite I am not suggesting that Indian languages are some kind of curse which we have to bear, but we got an elite which was less responsive and less concerned with those norms I personally don't know how that process could have been avoided In other words, I am suggesting that democracy in India is a contradiction in terms You have representative institutions, the more representative they are the less concerned they are with those norms You may talk of the inadequacy of the judiciary, or inadequacy of bureaucracy But my God, you should be grateful for the kind of bureaucracy you have If you are electing your bureaucrats or you are electing your judges, I dread to think the kind of people you will get With every successive election, the quality of democratic representation has gone down

There are many other changes taking place in the country We are seeing the disruption of a stagnant traditional order and the rise of a commercial and a semi-industrial order, where everyone is for himself How many of us can put our hand on our heart and say we are not concerned with ourselves? And are we to blame if we are trying to protect ourselves in a rapidly changing situation, where every year 20 to 25 per cent of our effective earning is eroded? And every year many of us are worse off than before? So, in a situation like that, where do you produce the focus? And what kind of remedies do you suggest? I mean, I wish I could subscribe to the decentralisation theory I am unable to do so not because I think decentralisation is bad, but I don't know where to begin Decentralise what? I have not known of a single civic body which has worked effectively, which has not been a den of corruption and casteism I dread to think of leaderships rising at the regional levels without resulting in the break of the country Any comparison with the Nehru era is completely inept because the people were acquiescent, and there

was really no regional leadership worth the name. B C Roy may have had certain privileges, but he could not win an election on his own And certainly he couldn't carry the Congress Party to victory in Bengal I know of no regional leader in the Nehru era who could have won elections without Nehru's support What kind of regional autonomy was that? Autonomy granted by him, not autonomy won by those people

Bashir has one set of preferences where democracy is most important to him I perhaps grew up in a different era where the nation State was more important, where unity was more important And I see that my friend Bashir, Rajni and many others take that unity for granted I don't and I view developments in Assam with the gravest misgivings I don't believe that Assam is going to be repeated all over the country, but things are pretty bad and they can get worse I am not suggesting that over-centralisation of authority is a solution In fact, the tragedy is that there is no solution The choice is not between over-centralisation and decentralisation The problem is lack of effective institutional framework and lack of effective leadership at every level of our society

How and where do we begin to produce this leadership? I wish I could find some focus of hope, some nucleus from where one could think of building You know, this might look a deeply pessimistic picture It is in some ways but it is also a sign of the rapid changes that are taking place Most nations in the 18th and 19th centuries and a large part of 20th century Europe have been conversant with the same kind of problems — these are not really peculiar to us We have to face them to go through this painful process of social change. You know, what the much maligned elite of the country may have been attempting, may not be anything short of a cultural or a civilisational transplant Values, institutions belonging to an alien society produced there after centuries of experiments and hard work and suffering are sought to be transplanted on a soil which may not be very congenial When we broke up for lunch, Raj Krishna suggested that we should have really discussed the whole thing in two perspectives — one, what is likely to happen or what is the situation on the ground, and second, our preferences People like us can mostly state our preferences We can diagnose the situation on the ground, we can project our minds into the future But I don't think we can marry the two — that is, the desirable and the likely

**Nihal Singh.** I am a journalist I think the basic problem has been analysed threadbare not only here but in various forums elsewhere On one side you have the desire for a better institutional framework, on the other side, you have a desire to be better people because, after all, any framework is only as good as the people concerned Now, where do we go from here? Obviously, despite what Jam had to say, the problem has to be discussed in the context of the present leadership which means largely talking of one person, if not a family So, where do we begin? There is one suggestion by Bashir, that we should



have a democratic institutional framework Fair enough, but the institutional framework that exists can be bent and is being bent I would agree with Prem Shanker Jha that our basic, democratic framework by itself is not bad It is a question of who runs that framework and how. Judges and the judiciary have been discussed but may I say that during the Emergency, the one profession which came out best was the judicial profession Not any other And what is it that is making even that profession less than courageous today? I think the only answer I can think of is that instead of trying to define or refine institutions, each of us must look inwards and see to what extent we ourselves have failed I think this suggestion was made earlier in the morning, and I would support that

**Bimal Prasad** I introduced myself in the forenoon. You see, if you recognise every crisis as a crisis of leadership, I don't know how more decentralisation will solve this problem Is it the assumption that the leadership at the local level is going to be more mature, or more devoted to the public causes, or more immune from corruption, or jobbery or tyrannical tendencies? So decentralisation is a good thing just like socialism is a good thing But the point just now is to diagnose the problem and then suggest a remedy If the diagnosis is over-centralisation, then the solution could be decentralisation But, I think basically it is the crisis of growing capitalism. We are transforming feudal society to a largely capitalist society. Political parties are also functioning like commercial organisations, and values have changed Everybody is for himself, even not for his mother or father. We look to America and West Germany because these are the societies of developed capitalism But the reference made to 18th and 19th century Europe when capitalism was still growing and the old loyalties were being transplanted, is relevant Some of these problems are inevitable But much of it lies in credible political leadership, dedicated to the public cause

Now, how do you manufacture it through giving more powers You see, I don't think the Harijans in Bihar are going to support that the district councils be made completely autonomous No State Government is suffering because there is no autonomy It is suffering because its leaders are busy squabbling A kind of a continuous riot is going on In that situation there have been distortions, of course, which is a kind of a distortion of our Constitution Let us raise our voice remembering that we were silent when this distortion was taking place earlier I think the remedy for India's evil is at least to issue a report to the people Let there be formation of a political party which believes in democracy and socialism If we want to emphasise these things, let there be parties based on ideologies Secondly, let every party conform to certain rules of the game For instance, compell every party to publish its accounts Let there be a rule that persons who join a political party today, may not be given any ticket for the next three years or five years so that we deal with this problem of defections Let there be a rule that a person can be a member of a legislature or minister consecutively for

only two terms So, you see, these are the remedies and the present momentum of centralisation is not excessive and is required for the completion of this capitalist revolution and for safeguarding the interests of some of the weaker sections

Bashir Ahmed mentioned that changes have taken place at the grass-roots level New classes have emerged. Yes, because those new classes have emerged the Central Government must be made strong Who will protect these poorer sections and the Harijans against those new classes? Then, again, what is the demand of teachers in every State? It is please free us from the control of the panchayats, put us under the State Governments The secondary school teachers — please make us also government schools They want to deal with the State Government which will be a bit more civilised than the district authorities And the same with the Centre You ask any teacher in any university, he would like freedom from the State Government because the Central Government functions in a certain ethos where some of the rules of the game cannot be so easily flouted Let us improve our gram panchayats, panchayats, District Councils, State Government That is a good thing. But, the cry should not go out that we require more decentralisation. The cry is that we want to improve the quality of political life It is here that the problem is and let us think of a solution in that field

**Jaidev Sethi** I am facing a crisis — (laughter) moral, political, cultural, social, not sexual Two or three points have emerged from the morning discussion and what Bashir has said One is quite clear that we must recognise that for the first time the nature and multiplicity of the crisis is so overwhelming that there cannot be an easy solution I think India has really entered the most dangerous decade Giri's apprehensions about the unity of the country being threatened cannot be dismissed. Nor can the apprehensions of those who talked about the entrenched poverty of the people We are now facing an external crisis and an economic crisis The height of the economic crisis, I suppose, is the mismanagement of the economy. Otherwise, you can't explain with 20 or 25 per cent rate of saving, the growth rate being about 3 per cent Now these are serious dangers and partial solutions would immediately bring a counter retort. If Soli Sorabji talked about better judges, someone says that judges really don't matter But are they mutually exclusive It's only a matter of somebody putting a greater emphasis on one than on the other. Deshpande said: 'What can the small States do?' Nobody is saying that the small State is a panacea If you can prove that large States are necessary for development and for people's participation, then you have made the point. But given everything else, if UP, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh have had a zero growth rate per capita for the last 10 years, one of the variables might be the largeness of the State. It is not that it is the only variable

Take decentralisation — it is never given or taken In any society, the processes of decentralisation and centralisation go on simultaneously as in the U S A



So, nothing static about it. Giri was right in saying that there is a power regression in this country and, therefore, we have to see the whole question in the context of that. The whole base of power is being eroded. So what are you distributing? But that does not dismiss the question of decentralisation, because there is a problem. There is no constitutional mechanism, no political power system in this country, on the basis of which power is devolved from the States to the local bodies. I am rather surprised that an experienced man like Bimalbabu should say that the local people will not be defended if the Centre is not strong. When has a strong Centre defended the Harijans? It is ultimately the same argument the British used to give: 'You people are not fit for education, for freedom, you first get fit for it then we will give you freedom.' Democracy or the people's participation or social transformation is not an easy process. In fact, I am not in favour of decentralisation in the sense in which they are talking. The dangers of decentralisation are as alarming as of unnecessary centralisation. The question is where do you want decentralisation and in what form.

Finally, one point I want to make arising from Bashir's paper. It has been said in the morning, with much breast-beating, that every time there is a problem, ours is an elite approach. Now, every society is predominantly either an elite society or actually an institutional society. Most western democracies are institutional systems. They have their own elite but are predominantly institutional. Most communist countries are predominantly elitist. Institutions have very little role to play though their role is increasing. Now, we should understand the role of the elite in two senses — the pejorative sense in which the word has been used and the sense in which it should be used, namely, that an elite has a role to play.

A society without the elite has not yet been born. The Gandhian model probably is a non-elitist model but has never been put to practise. The Maoist model which was thought to be non-elitist ultimately turned out to be elitist as well and was thrown out when it tried to be non-elitist. The role of the elite is to satisfy its own desires and privileges or whatever. But, at the same time, it identifies its interest with the rest of the nation, the people. Now we might say it's a contradiction in terms. But it is not. To be elitist in the best sense of the word, we should justify our privileges, we should perform our roles properly and it is in that context that the role of institutions comes in. Institutions degenerate because you do not allow the articulation of the masses to push through the institutional system. Or the elite corrupts those institutions, and only uses them for itself. This is the real crisis. These are not new things which are being said and my submission is that before we see other aspects of the discussion, we should accept two things. One that the suggestions made are not mutually exclusive. Where they are mutually exclusive, then it is our duty to say so. And, secondly, further discussion on the political system will not carry weight unless we identify what the positive role of the elite is in the political processes and in those of social transformation in

relation to both their privileges and the justification for those privileges.

**Prem Shanker Jha** Some issues have arisen on which I would like to say a few words. One is whether human beings are failing the system or the system itself is failing. The second is confusing the problems we face with the framework within which those problems can be solved. In short, if Girilal says the problems we face terrify him and he does not see any solutions, he is not denying that those problems exist. The question is which framework offers the best chances of success. Nobody is really saying that there isn't a crisis at all. If I gave that impression in the morning, I wish to correct myself. The second is decentralisation. Is decentralisation going to do the job? What kind of decentralisation? And the third question is whether democracy can cope with these problems at all? I would like to say, there is a crisis which is that the democratic system is about to break down. It may not happen, we may be extremely lucky but I think it will be unwise to bank upon it. Now, the crisis comes from two areas — one is prolonged economic stagnation which has led to scarcities and growing inequalities of income distribution. This leads to economic loss of legitimacy and much of our breast-beating about the elite comes from the feeling that the elite has got it good and that all our talk is ultimately only designed so that we can enjoy the good life a little while longer.

The second crisis is the political one. So far, the system has more or less delivered the goods. But there are signs of growing impatience. The people have not given up democracy, they are willing to keep voting, as revealed by electoral statistics, but what you do notice is that a fairly stable pattern of voting up to 1967 has become progressively more and more unstable. The swing after each election has become wider. Before 1967 you had a maximum swing of, may be, 3 per cent one way or the other. The fact that you are getting a wider swing means impatience and possibly growing despair not yet coming out in a withdrawal from democracy. But that might well be the next stage. What this means is that any government that comes to power is under pressure to deliver and there is the temptation to look for technocratic solutions. Technocrats by definition are impatient of the strains of a political system. The search for technocratic solutions also leads to a demand for centralisation of power. The general thing is 'if we have more power, we could do this.' Those damn politicians, they are always in our way, you know. Now, this to me is the biggest single threat we face because when all said and done, there are no technocratic solutions. There I agree with Girilal Jain.

The second point. In our Constitution all the things that matter to people — law and order, food, education, health, are all in the State sector. And it is precisely here that you have no performance. Now, if the system is not changed, and the power is increasingly de facto centralised in New Delhi, you will get a situation like the later Mughals. Firmans will be issued and nothing will happen and that's already



the case. You have an effective breakdown of government taking place. When the Centre has the power more and more in its hands to veto or to promote things, what you get are irresponsible States. So the kind of decentralisation we need is to bring back the convergence of power with responsibility — the re-development of poli-centric democracy. Re-development because we were moving in that direction till 1967, till 1969 to be quite exact. If we don't create a weak Centre, a Centre that looks after only defence, foreign policy, currency and certain aspects of the economic policy, if we don't one day take a deep breath and say we are going to force the States to take full responsibility for the areas in which they perform, then this system will not function any further.

One thing more, what goes with the idea of a strong Centre is charismatic government. Nehru had more charisma than Mrs Gandhi ever will but people talked far less about charismatic government in those days. The word came from American sociologists who talked a lot about it. Now we have grabbed it because charismatic government really means that the individual emerges when all institutions decline. It is not that the individual grows higher, but that everything beneath the structure has sunk. What happens then when this leader goes? You get de facto decentralisation, a total breakdown at the Centre. Suddenly there will be a power vacuum at the Centre but you have taken the power away from the States. It will happen irrespective of whether this country is a democracy or dictatorship at that time. It can be anarchic but non-violent, or violent and anarchic. That's the only difference. We are going to have de facto decentralisation whether you like it or not. Single-party dominance is going to come to an end. It came very nearly to an end in 1969. It was re-established by a fantastic act of sheer guts, and we have to give full credit to Mrs Gandhi for that. It is re-established again in 1980 with the courtesy of the opposition, then Janata. But, after all, institutions outlive individuals and that is one of the annoying facts that Indian politicians haven't come to terms with.

**Mrinal Datta-Chaudhuri.** I teach economics. I want to carry a line of reasoning a little further from where my friend Girilal Jam stopped. He said that all one can do at this stage, is to talk about one's political values and voice one's fears. I happen to take political values and fears very seriously, because as soon as a society experiences fears, anxieties, new political formations do come about and it is in that context that my friend Girilal Jam's fears are going to be important inputs into new political formations in the country. And, again, talking about values, with apologies to Jaidev Sethi, we Indian elite groups or Hindu elite groups have been obsessed with the idea of the unity of the nation. Now you have the combination of the two, an obsession with the unity of the nation and thinking that if the unity gets broken down, that's the worst disaster that can happen to society. Combining that is the fear that a relatively badly performing social system going through inevitable socio-economic changes, or bring-

ing out new elite groups who are, in Giri's terms, corrupt, self-seeking, crude, can lead to a very fearful thing. It has happened all over the world whenever you get this combination that elite groups in the society get anxious about the breaking up of the system, feel that existing institutions cannot really contain the crudeness or the tensions generated by the emergence of new elite groups, inevitably a charismatic leader emerges who says 'outside this process I can mediate all your problems'. And this is what I feel is the crisis that this polity is facing today.

**Narendra Mehrotra.** I am a scientist by profession. All westernized paradigms are accepted. Nobody even questioned them before, nobody questions them even now. So, unless we destroy the existing institutions, nothing can be built.

Decentralization must be wrested in all professions at all levels. (*Tape missing. A summary*)

**Satish Saberwal.** I had a couple of notions. On the one hand, the last three decades have seen the working out of a capitalist order which is necessarily an unequalising process. It produces on the one hand the kinds of experiences that Kishore Saint referred to in the morning, of the villagers who see their circumstances declining from one generation to the other and, at the other, the whole five-star culture and the various levels in between. This has been happening simultaneously with the rhetoric about the socialist pattern of society and reduction of inequalities which were very closely associated with Nehru. Juxtaposed with each other, all these and the associated institutional structures, in some ways lose their legitimacy because it is possible for the two to happen at the same time.

The other chain which seems to connect up is a consequence of the process of democratic participation where you have new leadership arising from rural bases. Now, implied in many comments made, this new leadership is self-seeking, crude etc etc. The point is that when it hits the established system, what it obviously must observe is that the others who run this system certainly don't abstain from self-seeking. Only, their self-seeking is a little more measured, a little more institutionalised. Institutions serve to give a certain rhythm to the process of self-seeking by the participants. So, again, the legitimacy of the institutional structure is undermined by the convergence of these two very powerful streams. I guess this is not the first time in history this has happened. But it seems to me the instruments which you need for re-establishing a sense of legitimacy, a sense of rhythm, would have to be different from perhaps just issuing of statements.

**G P Deshpande.** Jawaharlal Nehru University. I want to make only a couple of points. The first is that brought up as I am in a Brahminical tradition, words somehow have a particular attraction for me as it were. I might as well introduce one word which has not been mentioned so far and that word is exploitation. I think, somewhere the whole business is



related to exploitation. Wherever there was a parallel organisation challenging exploitation, things worked better. If there are more Harijans and landless labour being treated the way they are in Bihar and less so, shall we say, further east or down south-west somewhere, it is partly related to the fact that there is an organisation of landless labour there, and not because of the size of the State. It is not as though caste is not a phenomenon there, but the point is that there is a good deal of organisation. And what is happening, presumably, is that there are two sets of organisations gradually coming face to face. One is organised in New Delhi through the Central Government. But there are other people, growing and organising against exploitation. So, the situation is perhaps not altogether pessimistic as somebody described it. Organisations are growing and it is political decentralisation at that level that is going to be important. But various sections of our population are simply not getting organised and where there is no organisation, they look to the Centre. Those who rule this country try to make sure that this kind of organised force does not grow.

For example, reference was made to the various Chief Ministers in the Nehru era and Jain was absolutely right that they could not have won the elections all by themselves and that's why Nehru permitted them to thrive. But there was one Chief Minister in a certain part of the country who came in spite of Nehru and like Vyas at the end of the *Mahabharata* said that 'I am standing here with my hands folded, and nobody listens to me'. That was the situation in '57. So it is quite clear that there are some people in this country who are getting votes in spite of Nehru, in spite of Shastri, in spite of Mrs Gandhi. So you have an organised element of our polity, and you have a disorganised element and it is in this disorganised element of our polity that anarchy reigns supreme. So, I think the crisis in our system is greatly linked up with exploitation. It is not a question of which section of the elite or of using the word 'elite'. The point at issue is what is the elite using? And the elite is using guns, the elite is using canes, lathis and things of that sort.

I believe that there are two levels of crisis, two levels of disturbances — one level at which the elite which rules, looks at disturbance and tries to adopt certain means of meeting it. There is also another level at which the crisis is developing — the kind of people whom we perhaps would not like to be organised are getting organised. If we do not distinguish between these two kinds of organisations, then we will have a tendency to treat all disturbance as basically one kind of disturbance. And if we do that, then whether it is a centralised or a decentralised structure, the answer would be the same. The question is whether it is the district authority which uses the guns or the Central Government or somebody else. But if we start distinguishing between disturbances, our approaches are going to be different. So these two disturbances will have to be distinguished. I would personally say I take a deeply pessimistic view of one kind of disturbance and a very rosy, optimistic view of the other of kind disturbance. Disturbance, in any case,

is inevitable. In other words, there are two crises — one is desirable and the other is undesirable.

**Rajendra Prasad** of IIT: Votes do not reflect support by the people because they may be misled by false issues. What can the young learn from such a gathering? Many of the big ones here have no time even to meet the young. Individual commitment can start a movement. The youth is disheartened. It must be given hope. (*Tape missing. A summary*)

**Nayantara Sehgal**: I am a writer. We have a very high level of discussion here and it has been accompanied by considerable expertise of all those who participated in it and I certainly have no wish to divert us from the kind of discussion we are having or the kind of assessment we are trying to make. But I would suggest that we should also consider an aspect that has been mentioned but it has not been discussed. And this is the aspect of raw power which we know is working in our midst. I will put it to you that while we talk almost hourly, the entire polity is being subverted and dynamited. Elements of one sort or the other are being planted in the Secretariat, at the Centre and in the States. If you look at the Cabinet, or other so called repositories of authority or power, or responsibility, they are almost non-functioning and there is a state of complete paralysis today. Authority is issuing from behind the scenes and definitely this behind-the-scene functioning is what is carrying the day, whether it is in Assam, which is far away, or in Delhi. We are all aware of it. Perhaps, it is even permeating the law courts, the newspaper offices, private sector, in the street, the Indian Airlines, the kind of appointments being made there, as much as it now controls the centres of political power. Delhi alone is a good example of a takeover which has already taken place. It has happened. Overnight, the Metropolitan Council was dissolved, the NDMC superseded. Ruling Delhi is the Lt-Governor whom we can now call the dictator of Delhi, who is aided by policemen completely loyal to the behind-the-scene authority which is functioning. I submit to you that in our discussions here today we will be exceedingly irrelevant if we remain two steps behind the raw reality which is already here. We have to bring this discussion or at least this aspect of it into our talk. We have to bring it out of innuendo. We have to state it in plain terms because we do not have long to do so. Somebody said that in due course we will face either the communists or fascists that have been descending upon us. I submit to you that we do not have to wait. A fascist set-up is already upon us. We are living in it. I suggest that we give some mind to it in this discussion.

**Urmila Phadnis**: I teach in Jawaharlal Nehru University. After hearing Mrs Sehgal I feel a bit more confused than I was even earlier. The emphasis has been so much on crisis that some of the by-products of crisis which seem to be functional also have been lost sight of. Looking at the needs of the class to which 80 per cent of the people in terms of a social mono-structure belong, the Congress era combined in the system organisation as well as a set of



norms, the legacy of the nationalist movement. The important point about the Congress system is not that it survived so long, but the simultaneity that it was not only an organisation but also a movement of thought. Now since morning and particularly in the afternoon we have been emphasising institutions, structures, institutions and in the process have lost track of the movements social, economic, where the leadership may not be as useless as we are assuming because we have the Centre and the State leaders in our minds. The cumulative effect of non-political organisations and movements we saw in 1974. Now, it seems we should concentrate on three things: institutions, organisations, and movements which also have to be taken note of and there the whole issue of communication and coordination has to be reckoned with. This group of elites, I suppose, could coordinate jobs, perhaps, because all the time, I am asking myself one question: what task do we assign to ourselves. Let's be very honest with ourselves. We are intellectuals. We are very good at discussing things. We can go back. I do my job. Somebody else does his job. I write a paper, somebody else teaches. Now this sort of group, to my mind, could do partly the communications job, but more so the coordination job.

**Ved Pratap Vaidik:** I work in 'Navbharat Times'. Indian democracy has failed. That it is succeeding is wishful thinking. Democracy is a government answerable to the people and no party has won with more than 44% and that too only of those who voted. So, no government has represented the people — they all have failed.

There are no real political parties, only private limited companies, with no internal debates within the parties. The Emergency was straight bureaucratic rule. Voting is on the basis of caste, corruption and other non-political issues. Mrs Gandhi alone is not responsible for fascism. Other leaders are also responsible. There is no reason to fear the collapse of the political system as it is only a small part of India's life. Culture is far more important. The rot started with Nehru who was only a political leader, not a wise cultural, value-creating leader. A parallel polity is needed. (*Tape missing. A summary.*)

**K R K Gandhi:** I am associated with a magazine, 'Mazdoor-Kisan Niti' being published from Kanpur. Most of the speakers have dwelt, I feel, on the symptoms rather than the disease. Basically, at the time of Independence power passed into the hands of a class which we may call big business in India — Tata, Birlas, and the Congress leadership since then has continuously followed policies which benefit the interests of that particular class. At the time of Nehru or during the first 15 years, the interests of other classes, let's say peasants, or let's say traders, or even let's say lower middle classes were linked with the growth of Tata and Birla — that particular class which was controlling. So, for the next 10, 15 years we didn't see much of a struggle for power. Some of the interests of the lesser classes could be accommodated within the broader interests of Tata

and Birlas and others. But after 1967 we saw that the Congress, as a party being able to accommodate the interests of other classes, had outlived its utility, we saw the rise of rich peasants or traders, let us say, who started asserting their interests independent of the interests of big capital and a period of instability has since then set in. This has mainly expressed itself in a struggle for power between these well-off classes rather than between the actually poor and the rich.

Since 1967 one thing is clear — that the class that rules India today has sufficient power, both politically and economically to impose a dictatorship on all other classes and that was shown in the Emergency. Secondly, the middle classes of rich peasants or traders who tried to provide an alternative government through the 1977 elections miserably failed in preserving their interests or warding off another dictatorship and I don't think that we have any more hope from these classes of providing any kind of defence against dictatorship. Now, I think the choice before us is whether we really want to ward off dictatorship, preserve democracy or, let us say, we want to ensure a system where better things can be done. The choice is between big capital and the poor and oppressed.

**Romesh Thapar:** I want Rajni to speak now and in as short an intervention as possible summarise what we have done so far.

**Dev Dutt:** One minute. I thought I would just draw your attention to a small aspect of this problem of decentralisation. This raw power at the Centre or at the top is a reflection of a pervasive phenomenon of raw power operating at the State level, at the lower levels of society. So, may be that cumulatively now we are seeing some sort of crystallisation. The whole society is being regulated by a tyranny of the minority. At the social level this is an important phenomenon in the process of centralisation.

**Rajni Kothari:** It is, obviously, difficult to summarise and I don't think that is the intention of Romesh. What I would like to do is to not respond but take account of some very keen interventions and give a slight response in respect of what the group had thought of. To me decentralisation is no more than something that is inherent in democracy. You cannot have democracy from the top. It is a contradiction in terms. To take power closer to the people is inherent in the democratic ideology. I don't see any contradiction there and I can see Girilal Jan's dichotomy of orientation over the nation State and orientation towards the word, democracy, and the difference between them is a very thin line that divides his generation from mine and Mrinal Chowdhuri's. But, nonetheless, nationalism and democracy can be antithetical. I don't see how decentralisation and democracy can ever be antithetical. I am sorry, nationalism and decentralisation can be antithetical. So I don't want to go into a theoretical defence of that. But the defence of democracy and decentralisation has to be against two elements — oppression from above, turmoil from below which can take irrational lines. As I said



I don't want to be misunderstood because I am not against turmoil, I am against taking the two classes of Deshpande, two classes of turmoil, one for which he is pessimistic, one for which he is optimistic. I don't have a clear faith that without channelling the energies of the 70 per cent, they will make their own system. I don't like to idolise the unorganised masses as if they will some day produce a heaven for themselves. I am not sure that things getting worse will necessarily lead to things getting better. I am not sure and that's why I think of the role of the intelligentsia, opinion-makers, the media and so forth.

The issue is that the structure and movement that we started within the party spectrum, in the institutional spectrum, are exhausted. And the sources of renewal are not easy to find and it is in this respect that one has to build something new, our defences against oppression, and prepare for a different system when our chance comes again. We were not prepared in 77 and one has to think about the long term because in the short term we are almost powerless. You see, I do believe what they are saying that there is stark misery and deprivation. In fact, one thing we have not mentioned in the document is that this deprivation is not even social and economic. It is physical. Even simple survival is not possible. Under these conditions, a number of young people are doing excellent work in a micro situation, but they have no control over macro processes. Secondly, they also perhaps are working on some welfare orientation concept that they could do some good. They are up in arms against the welfare policies from above, of the government sector, the bureaucratic sector, the voluntary sector itself, and I see therefore a basic problem they must face. Without building the power of the people to do things for themselves, there is no future. I am both for the movement at the grass-roots and for the people and that is the meaning of decentralisation. Tarkunde said rightly that only the masses can remove poverty. We cannot remove it for them. However motivated we are, welfare State concepts are dead. They were useful for a while with Fabian socialism and so on. We want decentralisation and democracy therefore as the harbinger of a new social order. Nothing less than that. We are discussing the politics of how you move an extremely poor society towards self-reliant modes of development and only in that way does decentralisation make sense. Therefore, the raw power that we will face, unfortunately, will be always there unless we build these enormous defences that only decentralisation can provide. I think that is the basic thing I would like to discuss in the next session, and in the economic session.

## CONSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE

**George Verghese** Constitutional and administrative issues telescope partly with the political questions we were dealing with earlier and the economic and social ones we will be discussing tomorrow because these are the instrumentalities for delivering on these various problems. But first to respond to the point made that we should be concerned with immediate issues. The

two are interwoven. Problems of authoritarianism are symptoms of a larger disease and unless we address ourselves equally to the long-term as well as short-term problems, we would always find we were fire-fighting because today's short-term problem was yesterday's long-term problem. The crisis in the system is to accommodate in the polity the whole of the people, and the newly-emerging forces. And liberty is not viable by itself unless the liberal society, if possible, also stands on pillars of equality and fraternity. And I think the 1977 vote was as much a vote for freedom as an instrument for social and economic transformation and to safeguard the democratic interests of the poor as much as anything else. And therefore in a constitutional sense I would repudiate the theory that has been advocated that a liberal society, an open society and fundamental rights are in conflict with development of the directive principles.

Now, for constitutional changes, much has been said about decentralisation. This is to bring the whole process of development and change and fulfilling the aspirations nearer the people, to bring about participation. In terms of States' sizes and smaller States there is a question of a span of administrative and political management. Some of our States, like U P — over 100 million, are impossibly large. The size of districts in terms of population, even our blocks, are possibly too large. This is one aspect. The other aspect is a comprehension of the problem of participation. The enormous diversities in space, in size, in the different levels of development of technology, of social behaviour, etc., cannot all be put into a simple State jacket with the social, cultural variables that we have. Then, decentralisation also becomes important as an instrumentality of participation and of fulfilling the aspirations we talked about. This is one factor.

Now, in this process one is strengthening the federal system. We are a union of States. But a strong Centre is assuming to itself more and more powers — the dissolution of States, the suspension of legislatures, the dictats to Governors. This is not consistent with the spirit or the letter of the Constitution. It is certainly not in consonance with the directions in which we must move if we are to fulfil our aspirations. Now, Panchayat Raj, we say, was tried and failed. I would argue it has been tried and has failed but not essentially in substance. Municipalities have never been allowed to work in terms of powers, personnel, in terms of the State. The other Panchayat Raj was given short shrift when it began to work on the development side, say, in Maharashtra. The second chief executive officer was set up to take over the development and planning functions because people at the State level felt threatened. Now this, therefore, again is something that we need to look at in terms of decentralisation in a meaningful sense. The Ashok Mehta Committee recommendations could be adopted and amended. This is an area where States could take the initiative for a start. But it needs to be entrenched. There is no constitutional guarantee.

Local self government has no place in our constitutional picture, apart from a directive principle. It has



no teeth Elections may or may not be held, these institutions may be superseded, they may not be funded, there is no redress at all. This is a lacuna that needs to be made good by constitutional amendment, but we do not have to wait till the constitutional amendment comes I think these are not necessarily sequential, we have to attack the problem as quickly as possible. Another such suggestion that has been made is about the concept of something approaching large city States, because we have these large metropolitan centres, centres which wield so much power that they dominate the rest and they have peculiar problems of their own, and a greater balance may perhaps be introduced into the whole system if these could be disaggregated while maintaining and trying to forge closer urban-rural axis not merely between the metropolitan cities and the countryside but between urban India generally and rural India. These are not opposites, but two sides of the same coin and must go hand in hand

The system has shown the need for various checks and balances, and our President is not merely a constitutional rubber-stamp like the British sovereign. The Constitution provides our President with a number of powers to review, to delay, to initiate, to address both Houses of Parliament and certain discretionary powers in the formation and dissolution of ministries Now, these have not been tested out and therefore there was a great aura of crisis when it came to the crunch recently Obviously, this calls for some kinds of institutional safeguards Likewise, Governors at the State level They have become hands of the Central Government and virtually being asked to sign on the dotted line for reports prepared earlier. Now, this again is an institution in need to be greatly strengthened to iron out problems between the Centre and States. There are constitutional articles that provide for an inter-State Council These need to be activated

The Rajya Sabha again is not the Council of States it was meant to be but a pale reflection of the Lok Sabha One suggestion would be to link the electoral college with the Panchayati Raj structure so that it is drawn from a much wider base and strengthens that third tier. The other thing would be to strengthen representation for interest groups. At the moment there are 12 nominated seats for people in the arts, in the letters and professions Perhaps, there is no reason to stop at that but to accommodate certain other economic and social groups, which may not be represented adequately elsewhere. Women were mentioned, other categories — workers, peasants But the composition and the nature of functioning of the Rajya Sabha has something to do with the working of the federal system and providing part of the system of checks and balances

Then, how is a democratic government held accountable? It rests on knowledge and information; freedom of information, the right to know is fundamental to the whole system And this is an area that again has tended to swing Media autonomy, particularly for the State-controlled media — broadcast-

ing, in particular, is of great importance Electoral reforms is an area of concern because that has become part of the power politics of little groups. Maybe we should think in terms of funding parties not merely for election but right through so that they don't fall into corrupt ways after elections Then ground rules for internal democracy within parties so that they don't become caucuses feathering their own nests The list system to widen the basis of representation to reduce castes and draw in those who have something to contribute to the political process Sri Lanka is about to introduce it Perhaps, there should be a choice between being a Minister and a Member of Parliament, as in Holland, and the West German system of a constructive no-confidence motion that is the constructive alternative In moving a no-confidence motion, we must indicate who you have confidence in so that it is not merely a negative exercise leaving a vacuum

Now administrative questions Here, again, the administration is an instrument but has become an employment exchange. The Government has become the largest employer, particularly in the States It is just growing I think we need to take a close look at the administrative structures, these tensions between generalists and specialists, more lateral entry, the quick turn-round of personnel The independence of bureaucrats has been undermined, they have been reduced to being henchmen of X or Y or Z Our Secretariat needs to slim down and we need to strengthen the administration at the field level And, finally, the community has to assume responsibilities for action This is the end process of the whole decentralisation process, and unless people can and are allowed to organise themselves for action, we are not going to generate the pressures from the bottom that will help usher in some of these changes

**Ashok Desai** I am an advocate I'll first start with the modest disavowal that lawyers can usher in Ram Rajya except that I must remind you that Thomas Moore who wrote *Utopia* was a lawyer In Maharashtra we had a Bill some years ago which was called the Abolition of Famine in Maharashtra Act and it said that all famines in Maharashtra were abolished and now they would be called scarcity conditions But I am aware of the weaknesses of approaching structural change merely from the angle of constitutional changes Criticism can be validly made that law merely reflects caste structure or it affects a small number of litigants or it cannot save a whole society from going towards authoritarianism It is very important to realise that constitutional structure is the framework through which political power has to operate And in the last Emergency we found that anyone who wants to take authoritarian power, has to acquire and sustain legitimacy which can only be done by fiddling around with the Constitution

The present Constitution has its own history If a question arises has it served the people well, it has not alleviated misery or brought in equality, fraternity, justice, but it is very important to note that it does not provide any alibi for failure In fact, during



a very historic exchange in the Supreme Court, Niren De pointedly asked the Attorney-General whether any provision of the Constitution could be shown now which had impeded social reforms, he was not able to answer. Therefore, when I talk of constitutional changes, I want to suggest specific changes

I would like to identify five or six problems. One is the President himself. Now, we have not used the power of the President as a countervailing power to the Prime Minister. This is entirely due to historical development and, later on, the 42nd amendment. The letter of the Constitution as it stood said that there shall be a Council of Ministers to aid and advise the President. We didn't talk of anything being binding. By an accident of history we had Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister and Rajen Babu, the most self-effacing man, as the President. The result was that the Prime Minister's role became the dominant one and ultimately when the matter came to the final argument in the Supreme Court, the Supreme Court said in a phrase which I must repeat, that not the Potomac but the Thames fertilises the flow of the Jamuna, which in simple language means that our President is modelled after the British monarch. There is an error here because our President has a very peculiar elective college. He is elected indirectly by taking the votes not merely of the members of the Lok Sabha but also the votes of members of the Legislative Assemblies. Therefore, in a sense the President represents the States in a far more significant sense than does the Prime Minister. Now you may have a situation where the President and the Prime Minister belong to the same party as we had all these years. But you may have a conflict and in such cases, I think, it is worthwhile considering whether the power of the President cannot be used as a countervailing power.

A specific instance arises from the destruction of the federal nature of our Constitution by successive governments. We are a Federation of States. The ambiguity is there from the very first Article. India that is Bharat shall be a Union of States. But the emergency can be declared in Article 356 only if there is a failure of constitutional machinery. These are very strong words — 'failure of constitutional machinery'. Now, how could one predicate that in Maharashtra recently when there was a stable government, with an overwhelming majority, there has been a failure of constitutional machinery. But, the original error does not lie with this government alone. It started with Kerala. Later, the Janata Government in rather peculiar circumstances dissolved about eight or nine Assemblies. Now, those circumstances are peculiar because out of the nine Assemblies, eight, like Parliament, had themselves extended their period — the five years had become six years. So there was some justification. But in its enthusiasm to approve of Janata Government's policy, the Supreme Court laid down very far-reaching statements and drawing from, I think, the Marxist phrase of alienation said there was alienation between the government and the

people which was shown by voting. Therefore, the government was justified in knocking out about eight or nine governments. Now that power is being used in totally different and unjustifiable circumstances today.

We are told in Maharashtra, that there is a breakdown of constitutional machinery. And this is one area where I think that a constitutional amendment can well be suggested — that the President would have an independent role to decide whether there is a failure of machinery in the State or not, so that the Prime Minister, who has the confidence of the Lok Sabha, alone cannot dissolve or knock out various governments which may not belong to his or her party. And one can almost foresee today that in Kerala or West Bengal, there is soon going to be a failure of constitutional machinery so that they are also knocked out.

There is another area which is extremely important. The division of subjects between the States and the Centre gives all industry to the States, subject to a proviso that if the industry is described as expedient in the public interest it gets itself transferred, or the happy lawyers' phrase is that States get denuded of their power to legislate on it. This started with some very important industries like steel, where one could make out a case that the Centre should have the power. It now covers 55 industries. The latest includes printing presses and all presses, and I am ashamed to say this was an amendment of the Janata Government. It was moved by Vasant Sathe, who in all innocence wanted to scare a printing press in Nagpur but he added the word 'lithograph'. He moved the amendment, lithograph. Then George Fernandes who presumably had other accounts to settle added words and phrases. The result is that all presses today are controlled by the Centre. Now, the industrial development regulation Act is a vital Act where without a constitutional amendment the States cannot get back their power.

Next is, of course, the judiciary—appointment, tenure and retirement. Now, I will take retirement first. Napoleon used to say that every soldier in his army carried a Field-Marshal or Marshal's baton in his knapsack. Now, unfortunately, many of our judges feel that they carry batons of various tags—Supreme Court Justice, Chief Justice of India, Ambassadorship, if you like, in their knapsack. Now this is a human failing. I mean, they can't be better or worse than we are and, of course, they are much better than members of Legislatures. So one needn't be so apologetic. But as a result there is always some rationalisation that the viewpoints of the government may be right. The Americans have a very interesting system where they give the identical salary to the judge even after retirement. Now, we pay our judges a very feeble amount. It is very difficult, of course, to make out a case of more than Rs. 3,500 which is probably 10 times the average income. But compared to the class from which they are drawn, they are paid very feebly. Surely, one thing which can be done is to give them



the same salary after they retire with a condition which, interestingly, the Auditor and the Comptroller-General are subject to, namely, that they shall not take any job under the government after retirement. This can, perhaps, make the judges not think of the future but live in the present.

Second thing is about appointment. We had a Bar Association of India meeting which came out with a resolution that the Chief Justice of India of any particular court and the two senior-most judges along with two members of the Bar who may be nominated for the purpose, should have the final say on the appointment of a judge. Now this is only subject to one caveat that perhaps the government may give you the confidential report on a judge because of some matter which a lawyer may not know about.

When we talk of the laws' delays we forget that the largest litigant in the country is the government and what clogs up the code is by and large government appeals because government can appeal with tax-payer's money. One has to think of a method of appointment which is largely independent of government. Now, there are other points which I can only touch upon. One is the civil service. The whole purpose of Article 311 and other Articles was to give civil servants status rather than contract so that they could not be dismissed at the will of the master. Now, this is one area where one has to think of a civil service commission which can decide even about matters like transfers by considering the confidential papers relating to a civil servant. Then there are questions of elections, voting, autonomy of the media and the judicial system. But I shall constrain myself by saying that all these are changes in the framework. They can contribute up to a point, because as in a statement which a most learned man who did not become a Supreme Court judge in America said, when liberty dies in the hearts of men, no constitution can save it.

**H K Paranjape.** May I say that what we have been attempting is to manage the transformation of our economic and social system without necessarily going through the kind of unjust authoritarian solutions that have usually marked such transformations. Whether you take the history of 18th or 19th century England or other countries which underwent the transformation, you had, as we read in Dickens, a history of misery and exploitation and with a very formal democratic system. The present impasse arising out of our 30 years' history is that we have really not succeeded in finding the solution of bringing about this transformation within an essentially democratic framework. Not that we have made no progress. The potential of our economy today, where handled, is such that quite a high rate of economic growth can be achieved provided the system politically, economically and socially can be properly managed. Now, the point is that, as the document very correctly says, many of the difficulties we face are really the difficulties arising out of change. There are expectations among people that their condition will be improved.

But those who have are very reluctant to give up, and the people who are deprived, are now ready to accept the award. This is the conflict, the crisis.

Here, I quite agree that conflicts need not all be deplored, as Gobind Deshpande was saying earlier, but he hinted that some of these conflicts might lead to desired solutions and therefore should be approved. But, if the conflicts are permitted to lead towards authoritarianism of a party like the Communist Party, then you get a new class. As you know, the new class continues to dominate even 60 years after the revolution.

Therefore, what people like us continue to try for is a solution which at least maintains the essence of democracy, while helping as much social or economic transformation as necessary to make the position acceptable. The secret of the British or some other democracies has been that the ruling class knew how much to concede in time, so that they were always a step ahead of a revolution. I am not saying that they are benevolent but perhaps they knew their self-interest better. What I am beginning to find is that our elites, our haves are so short-sighted that they don't seem to see their self-interest in the long run. And if they don't they will create a situation where not only their interests will no longer be preserved but the India of the whole freedom movement may no longer exist. Why was decentralisation, though spoken about for 20 years, never practised? Why are counter-rebel forces all the time throttled?

To my mind, everybody who has something, is so steeped in the non-democratic, in the feudal hierarchal system the way he is brought up, that he doesn't want to give up what he has. If I am director of an institute, I don't want to concede any powers to my colleagues. If I am head of the department, I don't want anybody else in the department to have powers, and so on and so forth. Now, unless the elites are ready to look at their own long-term interests and concede some things in time, the essence of democracy cannot be maintained. It may not be as good a transformation for the poor as it should be. But the essence of the system is preserved. It may be considered a trick but one that serves the long-term interests of our society. Therefore, if we don't realise our own long-term self-interest, as the present trend seems to indicate, then we may not succeed either in maintaining or guarding it and certainly not in preserving the unity of India, or perhaps the democratic system.

**L. C. Jain.** After Nayantara spoke, I am not sure whether we aren't in a situation where Nero was fiddling when Rome was burning. Though Ashok Desai ably mentioned that the Assemblies were dissolved with reference to the constitutional provision that the machinery had broken down, I thought what was more significant was the statement that these Assemblies were in confrontation with the Centre. The constitutional part of the argument was taken for the sake of the legal pundits, but for the general



public, a legitimacy was sought by saying that they are in confrontation we have been elected to carry a programme through and these people are obstructing.

When I mentioned to one of my close journalist friends that disturbed conditions have been declared in Assam, he said to me that what else could she do? I said she had spent more hours in the temples worshipping than in dialoguing with the students of Assam, what about that? There is talk of reviving the National Integration Council. If you find that the people of Assam are unreasonable, there could be a dialogue. You could get people from Assam and elsewhere, lock them up and say 'here you are, talk to each other, find a solution'. But no. Everybody in the country is expecting that government will find a solution and the government has found a solution. I am saying this essentially because it is not a question of what the regime is doing. But two things are happening, firstly, there is an expectation in everybody's mind that this is what would happen. When it happens, we telephone each other to say that this has happened. And, two, there is a growing section of people who feel that this is quite legitimate.

About decentralisation, after we became independent, colonialism persisted so far as district populations were concerned. Wherever you go, they say 'The Collector. Without the Collector nothing can be done'. So Collector. The rural population may vote for the Assembly or for Parliament, but so far as life is concerned it has not gone beyond the regime of the Collector Sahib. I was shocked when Bimal Babu referred to powers given to Panchayats over the teachers. Everyone knows that the village teacher draws his salary from the Education Department and the Director. He does not go to the village school. The village population has no control, no say in the matter. One Antyodaya family which was chosen as the poorest family with a per capita income of Rs. 11, had to pay a bribe of Rs. 22 to get a certificate of poverty. The Gaon Sabha had met, had decided. But the Collector said, 'I don't believe the Gaon Sabha. He must produce a certificate from the Tehsildar, S D O, who presides over a population of something like 20 to 25 lakhs'.

I went to a weaver's home in Gorakhpur. Just a simple weaver, with his two sons. The Labour Inspector came and said: 'You are employing labour. Where is your labour register. You have to maintain a register under the Establishment Act'. So, he said 'No. These are my two children'. 'No, you come under the Labour Act'. He doesn't know what the Labour Act is. All the village got together and said 'But, you know, he is a simple weaver. He doesn't employ anybody. It is his family'. They said 'No'. The Thanedar came. He had to pay Rs. 150. He didn't have it. The village collected Rs. 150 and paid it. It is this kind of regime that operates. When one is talking of decentralisation, it is not dilution of your authority but power for you to defend the nation at levels where this kind of defence is very necessary. In the Constitution we have said 'Everybody has one vote, they have got equal rights'. But

on the ground the situation is not equal. We have said we are delivering development to you, but development is not getting delivered to these people. In K.N. Raj's lecture yesterday, he showed that despite development, power, irrigation, etc., the problems of purchasing power and poverty remain. To many young people who are burning here to say, 'alright, we are having all this discussion but what shall we do?' I say that discussion is necessary to understand the nature of the animal before we jump into doing something about it. Faced with stark fascism, the only safeguard that we have is to bring into existence some kind of local organisation, local power, what J.P. called Lok Shakti. Today, everybody is completely helpless against authority of any kind. A demand rising from the grassroots is summed up in *Ek Ratti Adhikar*. If you say dictatorship, the message is not understood, but if you say power to the people and quantify it, the response is forthcoming. If the Central Government can dispense with Rs. 30,000 crores and Girilal Jain does not see as much corruption there as in a small civic body, a village panchayat administering Rs. 3,000, the heavens cannot fall. There may be corruption, but the kind of rape that is taking place of these very innocent and helpless people does not catch our eye. So if you want to restore some kind of stability, one amendment should see that village panchayat elections cannot be kept away for 14 years, that civic bodies are not superseded. Otherwise talking of power to the people makes no sense.

**D R. Mankekar** After listening to Lakshmi Jain and Inder Mohan and other friends who have their ears to the ground so far as the rural region is concerned, this discussion here would appear unrealistic. But it also underlines the fact that there is something terribly wrong with our Constitution, with our general political set-up that allows such a gap between the rural and the urban. Lakshmi's *shakti* (people's power) may not be very relevant in a discussion like this. Whether we like it or not, here we are bound to look for constitutional remedies. Many of the conventions involving the political set-up in the Third World are experimentations in seeking the right political system suitable to one's soil. The ex-colonial countries began their lives with democracy, and ultimately many of them lined up into dictatorships and either military or one-party States. I maintain that 30 years is not sufficient to evolve the appropriate system. Meanwhile, 32 years of experience has revealed glaring shortcomings in our Constitution. It is a federal constitution bringing together almost 18 nations. That being so, the founding fathers were prepared to face psychologically a situation where the various nationalities competing for the Centre's favour or their own rights would reach a situation which Assam has reached. So, a country of our size has to learn to live with this kind of situation. The problem is whether our rulers present a statesmanlike solution? How far to go and where to stop?

In Nehru's era, we showed tremendous political wisdom of a federal character when we persuaded



the DMK to give up a secessionist goal and agree to remain within the Constitution. These days more and more power is gathered at the Centre, completely nullifying the spirit of a federation. Now, I suggest that our Constitution provides that the Centre can really be strong without weakening the federating States. Now, this is one of the things we have to assert.

Then, we need a Constitution which should be expeditious. We have no time to waste on the cumbersome, slow, corrupt system of democracy we have. We need some devices for speedy implementation. Whenever hard decisions are taken, you run away from them. This is one of the defects of the type of men who come in through the present Constitution to rule our country. Even corruption is entirely due to the kind of constitution transplanted on a soil completely hostile to the Westminster-type of constitution. Now, I suggest that the kind of leadership we have is largely responsible for the kind of trouble we are suffering from in this country. If only we had better leadership, we could have done much better. Now, that also I suggest is because of our constitutional shortcomings. So, we should catalogue the shortcomings and create a set-up where you minimise the kind of problems that we are facing.

**P G Mavlinkar:** I was in Parliament for about seven years. By two miracles I was in, the third time I didn't succeed. But I continued to be independent and dependable also. I want to start by saying that it is good to be here in Delhi and see that there is a great change from 1975 and '76. I will quote from the last page of this Agenda for India on page 23. I believe it is so written and written before the campaign began. 'It is imperative that those who feel committed to Indian democracy and its performance in particular areas of public concern, will come out into the open and make their voices and demands felt. The fast deteriorating political and economic situation demands this and there is no time to lose.' I am sorry many of us in this hall chose not to come out into the open and make our demands effective during and before the campaign. For, election times are the best times to talk because people are in a mood to listen. But we should keep a dialogue going all the time. I believe we must educate our literate masters more than our illiterate masters. A large number of our literate masters just did not bother to come out and vote.

Just two other points. Perhaps in the 80s, what we need to concentrate on are electoral reforms and keeping the media free. The second depends very much less on legislation and very much more on what we do to the live instruments of the media. The recommendations for electoral reforms were with the Janata Government. Every session I used to ask a parliamentary question, written and oral, and every time I used to get an answer that it was under active consideration. But I now realise that the reforms were never under any consideration. Something else was obviously under consideration. I do want to make a point here that non-party individuals with a commit-

ment to certain values must have a place in the whole legislative system.

About media being quite free, I must tell you that I find that the smaller papers and the smaller magazines and periodicals are playing a larger role than the large newspapers. And what had been happening during the Emergency is happening now. Anyway, you can make your message powerful and potent only through effective, free communication channels.

Lastly, about constitutional changes, I think dissent inside Parliament is getting less effective because of the systematic, deliberate, mischievous, violent attack on the system and the whole process of parliamentary democracy inside Parliament. Therefore, perhaps, even those who are inside Parliament today may not be able to do what they ought to or might like to so we must give them a supporting hand from outside. I want some kind of amendment on anti-defection. I was a member of the select committee — we had many meetings at all sorts of places, including hill stations to which I did not go. There was no need to go to hill stations to discuss defections. But I can tell you, there is no party, opposition or ruling, interested in banning defections by law. And yet, we must pursue the anti-defection law with one simple clause — on whichever ticket you stand and get elected, the moment you give up that ticket you automatically cease to be a Member of Parliament. That's all. The moment you give up your image before the electorate which you had started with, you must immediately vacate. That must be the aim. This one-clause bill Mr. Shanti Bhushan told me was perhaps not possible to put into legal terms. Now lawyers always have their argument. But I am quite sure that given the will, we can have a law with one simple clause.

The other thing is that the period between dissolution of the Lok Sabha and the new election must not exceed two months. Last time, it was on the 22nd of August that the sixth Lok Sabha was dissolved. If you have a period longer than two months, then all kinds of delays and difficulties arise. So, I think a constitutional amendment is required for that. The Election Commissioner can't say that 'I must wait until the electoral rolls are ready.' It must be a continuous process and every quarter the Election Commissioner of India must see to it that electoral rolls are kept revised from quarter to quarter and revised further year to year.

Lastly, I want to say that we must have a quest for quality and excellence in our public life, and we must not equate political life with public life.

**Nirmal Bose:** After 30 years, it is necessary that we should have a thorough revision of our Constitution. I am happy to note that there is broad consensus on the point that there should be a revision of the provisions in respect of Centre-State relations. If India is to remain one, it must truly be a federal State which, unfortunately, it is not today. There are centralising tendencies. It is not a question of federalism alone. There is diversity of nationalities, cul-



ture, religion, language and even of political understanding. In West Bengal, in successive elections, it has been proved very clearly that the Left-Front Government has the total confidence of the people of the State. But tomorrow the Central government can remove it. So, what is needed today is to change the Constitution so as to ensure that a government elected in a State by the people there, can remain there independent of any interference from the Centre. Article 356 should go out, there should not be any emergency unless there is foreign aggression.

Secondly, it has been suggested here what we should do regarding the Rajya Sabha. There may be some alternatives but I would like to abolish it altogether. In West Bengal, I was a member of the Upper House. When the House was abolished, we lost nothing. Punjab followed suit. If the Rajya Sabha is to remain, it should be truly a Federal Council, meaning thereby that there should be equal representation from States as in the United States or Switzerland. It has been suggested that there may be functional representation in the Rajya Sabha or representation from the grassroots — Panchayat and so on. That might be a suggestion. Also, technocrats, bureaucrats and economists who play an important role. So, when we were discussing bicameralism and so on, we may discuss all these possibilities.

My last point. In our fundamental rights, there should be provision for the right to work. If the system cannot give you the work, you can get at least unemployment allowance. In West Bengal recently, unemployment allowance has been introduced and there has been a good effect upon the youth. So, it should be there in the Constitution. I am conscious that given today's composition of our Parliament, it is difficult to introduce all these changes. But from a gathering like this we should start a campaign for these changes. That is very important.

**Kishore Saint** I want to underline a strain which has been introduced in relation to the concept of decentralisation. There have been suggestions here that it is not merely a negative concept in terms of reduction of the power of the Centre or of the State, but it embodies something beyond that in terms of the regeneration of a parallel system of power, that of the people. I think we get faced with this problem because India is in a situation of a living civilisation which finds itself trying to be managed by this historically very recent institution of the nation State. The nation State as an institution may be adequate in terms of those systems whose civilisational routes were broken by discontinuities in the course of their history, but for us it creates very serious problems. We have got to recognise that there are limits to this mechanism of the nation State. It is not adequate enough to help us to manage this civilisation. And this is not something we have to be apologetic for. The civilisational, social, cultural substratum of our existence is a source of our strength. Now I am not talk-

ing in chauvinistic terms about ancient Hindu civilisation. But there are bases in our existence, in our social life, which require new kinds of institution building, organisation building. I think that is what many people who talk about 'lok shakti' mean. Now, this whole effort needs to get much greater legitimacy from the intelligentsia in this country who tends to look to the nation State as the *summum bonum* of the management mechanisms for our society. It is not enough. The nation State is not enough, will never be enough, no matter how much improvement, refinement, decentralisation we bring about in it. It is good to hear the expression 'parallel polity' and one wishes and one hopes that perhaps it can be spelt out further.

**Romesh Thapar** Well, we have now come to the end of the session. I must say that I get a feeling that there is despair which is now developing in the heart of everybody. But I think it is unwarranted. Something terribly horrendous has happened in our country. But I think the developments which are taking place in our country, should give us the faith to work out solutions for the alternative. If you look at those voting figures, they represent the hard core of resistance to authoritarianism — the interests of middle classes who are asserting themselves, the interests of Harijans who are, for the first time, fighting for their lives, to the interests of women who are beginning to see that the future does not rest in a woman leader. You have got to see the positive aspect of the situation, the splintering at the top of the leadership because there is no concept of the future of India before the leadership.

In political life whenever you face your darkest hour you must look at what is positive. This government, with its massive mandate, does not get any cooperation from any outstanding personality in any of the professions. Outstanding bureaucrats are anxious to move away from Delhi. They are not hankering for the leading jobs. And when a police officer or officers are harassed, there are hundreds of police officers who are prepared to be counted and protest. These are the signs of a deep crisis which everybody accepts. When you say change the Constitution, how can we do it? We do it by, first of all, seizing upon that vote against authoritarianism, trying to consolidate that vote even within the next two, three months. It can be done under any label, and whatever comes out of that vote, why can't the Rajya Sabha begin to change its complexion by the kind of candidates who are sent forward as nominees by those parties who have decided that the Rajya Sabha will not be a pale reflection of a dominated Lok Sabha. These are the ways democracy will find of changing its character. But to imagine that we have lost the battle, that all the institutions are eroded, that there is no resistance, that these exercises are impotent, I think this would be a grave disaster because we would be disarming our people, we would not be giving them any guidance whatsoever at this hour which is for them, I tell you, as tortuous as it is for us.



## ECONOMIC

**Mrinal Datta-Chaudhuri:** Only yesterday several speakers referred to the stagnation of the Indian economy. The important thing about stagnation today is that 20 years ago no economist would have believed that precisely this kind of stagnation would be possible in an economy like ours. Then most of us believed that if sufficient amount of wage goods, namely foodgrains, were available, the system could go on generating employment at a wage level. We believed that if we had enough foreign exchange reserves, then a fast pace of industrialisation was possible. Also, that if State power could scale the commanding heights in terms of our resources in the economy, then a vigorous, self-reliant industrial growth was possible. Today there is enough foodgrains in our reserves — over 20 million tons, we are putting under the mattress about Rs. 5,000 crores in foreign exchange, and the ideal of scaling the commanding heights has, by and large, been reached. The State controls not only the machinery of credit allocation in the country — in coal, electricity, infrastructural facilities, in regulating the prices of inputs and outputs, the power at the command of the State is almost what in the early 60s, we thought would be a desirable goal. But in spite of that we find that even though rats are not growing fast enough to eat up the foodgrain reserves, the per capita consumption today is lower than what it was in the early 60s. In spite of the excess capacity in our textile-producing centres, the per capita consumption of textiles is lower than what it was in the early 60s. And I can go on listing the varieties of such imbalances. In short, what we see today is that the traditional constraints on growth are all gone. The constraints coming from inadequate resources are no longer there.

But the system itself today is acting as a constraint on growth. Here I am not talking about the economic system in the sense that social scientists talk about it in the long sweep of history—capitalism, socialism, although I think both from the points of view of one's value premises and also in the context of talking about the very long-term development of society are important things. I am talking about the system that manages, that regulates. And this is the system in which politics, society and economic forces inter-act to produce the outcome, and this is what seems to have collapsed or is near collapse. I don't want to get into a discussion of the failure or success of capitalism and socialism, both have shown impressive results in different societies. I want to say that the performance of the system in certain crucial areas shows crucial types of failure. And this has nothing to do with being the public or the private sector. For example, this year our export quotas of textiles to West Europe and America were not fulfilled to the extent of even 60 per cent. Our exporters in the construction sectors are losing contracts in the Middle East to the South Koreans because they cannot deliver the goods in time. So, it is not really a failure of either public or private sector. I would rather say that in those activities which require coordination of action of various kinds of agencies,

there is systematic failure. Railways, electricity generation are obvious cases of that kind. And if you really try to characterise where the failures come, it's important to give a representation of what is the system that we are talking about which has come as a constraint in the performance of this economy. Briefly, I'll say that it is a system of economic organisation which is best characterised as highly bureaucratized State capitalism. At the apex of that organisation you have a highly centralised State which uses a whole complex of regulatory powers, most of them of a discretionary nature, and organised interest groups are manipulating that structure for their own selfish ends. The very big business don't have any problem because over the years they have learnt how to manipulate the system to get licences. But the vast, large number of producers who don't belong to that category of big business are left high and dry.

In agriculture, the very organised, powerful lobby of big producers, big farmers do not have the problem. They are using the State power to fix the prices of their marketable surplus, also prices of the inputs they buy. In fact, statistics would show that subsidies of the Central Government are mounting to the extent now of the order of a thousand crores of rupees. They don't have any problem. But the vast mass of people, small farmers, marginal farmers, agricultural labourers etc., are completely outside the system.

The small category of unionised labour in the organised sector don't have any problem. They have learnt how to play the political groups and the factions one against the other and how to use the coercive power which they enjoy to get what they need. And, of course, the politicians have already learnt that the discretionary economic power which the system enjoys is extremely useful to finance elections. So, here you have that inter-mesh of very powerful interest groups. In their selfish end, they are manipulating the bureaucratized State capitalism at the expense of the large number of people who have a stake in development, in job creation, who are left outside the political process. And this is why in the Agenda document we put the major emphasis on the re-structuring of the system in terms of decentralisation.

Decentralisation in economic terms means replacement of discretion by rules. And this is the essence of decentralisation as economists understand it, because discretion is used in favour of powerful groups who can control the apparatus of power. Rules can at least in principle become somewhat less personalised. In the political sense, we have talked about decentralisation because we need to take away the centre of decision-making from the highly centralised power structure, the State apparatus that we have in New Delhi to the level at which, perhaps, the potential gainers in the system—the landless labourers, small farmers, the people who are left out of that game that has been played—can participate, can organise themselves and have a say over time in the shaping of their destiny. Our concept of decentralisation basically centres



around one simple thesis that this present structure of organisation in the country has become, what in social science jargon is called a zero-sum game, a small number of vested-interest groups leaving the other participants, the potential gainers, out of that system. And the only way you can bring in the people who have a stake in the development process is to break precisely this narrow organisation which has been converted into a zero-sum game. This is in some sense the central thesis around which we have listed a number of proposals for reorientation of economic policies, restructuring of the system

I just want to make two points before I end. One of the responses we got when circulating the document was that the group seems to be anti-labour and I do want to make one thing rather clear. Today, our trade union movement in the country has become a preserve of factional party politics from extreme Right to Left, and if you look into the anatomy of industrial unrest, you will find the cause in inter-union rivalries where the same kind of mechanism that you see in the political process — of self-seeking, using the coercive power wherever it exists for factional ends, has permeated that world. Now, it is in the interest of the political groups and political parties who want to base themselves on the working class movement to move away from that culture in which the factional interests, short-run gains dominate the long-run interests of the dispossessed and the working class. I do maintain, and we in the steering group all maintain that it is in the interests of the working class movement itself that a responsive trade union movement, and norm-oriented industrial relations develop so that even the vast number outside the privileged section of the organised market can be brought in. This is not anti-labour, it is really bringing in democracy and distributive justice in the true sense of the term which should inform the trade union movement and industrial relations

Another point. It is important to realise that India is truly a continent. It is stratified in millions of directions. Its regional variations, group variations are enormous. We have already seen the kind of prescriptions for development that worked reasonably in Punjab and Haryana just didn't have any impact in Bihar. The kind of economic scenario of development that one can possibly postulate for Gujarat is just not likely to be successful in Bengal, because of the basic coordinates of development, the resource endowment, the entrepreneurial thing and how organised social action and individual interests can be coalesced in forging a development strategy. Now, if we are ever going to create for this continental size economy, development, growth, prosperity, justice, the system has got to allow different areas, different groups to experiment with different models of development based on their endowment, their experience, their compulsions. And this highly centralised State that we have today is a paradox. If it really wants to control the entire mediating power on resource allocation in the country in the name of national unity, the fate of that national unity

or national strength is not going to be anything different from the fate of national unity or national strength that President Ayub and President Yahya Khan tried to build

**Raj Krishna** The Agenda paper, if I may say so, is rather thin on economics and I hope to supplement some of its proposals. But before that I want to make two sorts of comments. First about the nature of this exercise which is going on here because that has relevance to what we want to come out with. As I see it this is an effort to organise the non-political intelligentsia as the conscience of the nation to reaffirm what the nation's values have been and what policies are desirable. Now, I am quite frankly pessimistic as to the survival of these values or behaviour norms or the acceptance of the policies which we propose. I think the dream is slowly dying inch by inch, day by day, in terms of liberty, abolition of poverty, cultural plurality and so on. But at least at this cerebral level it is the duty of the cerebral workers to keep the dream alive in terms of what is imperative and what is desirable.

Secondly, I think it is very important that the intelligentsia's thought be collectivised without cynicism and without too much fragmentation. It is very difficult to get the intelligentsia to agree to some desirable propositions on a collective basis. Over the last 20, 30 years the mainstream of India's economists and social scientists have had a consensus about a politico-economic structure and a politico-economic policy which will both be democratic and very sincerely committed to re-distributive justice. And, unlike the Janata Party, we should not split until we are one party per person.

Thirdly, it is our responsibility that whatever our collective thoughts are, they are simplified and presented to whatever audience we can have at the top and particularly the audience in the middle and the bottom. I strongly want to stress what Narayan Bhair said yesterday, that a communication job needs to be done. The same people may not be good at communicating at all levels, but there are lots of people among the intelligentsia who are of the communicative type.

The second point I will allow myself in the context of what went on yesterday is that I think the case for liberty should be started by us not in terms of the western scholars. To my mind, the case for liberty or fundamental rights in India arises from the point of view of the poor. If I saw that India can have a non-democratic polity in which re-distributive justice would come, I personally would be ready to sacrifice the intellectual and cultural freedoms of big business and the intelligentsia. Let us all be in prison. Let the press be censored. Let there be preventive detention provided that the authoritarian regime that comes is sincerely distributive. There have been some like that in South Korea, Taiwan and Communist China. But by and large the dictatorships in Africa, Latin America, South-East Asia



have been of the type under which distribution of income and wealth tends to be worse than under a very inefficient democracy.

Therefore, it is because the poor need the right to organise, to agitate, to unionise, to politicise themselves, to express their grievances in this vast country that we ask for liberty. It is not for the elite, who can always come to a good settlement with the ruling dictatorship I am satisfied that any non-democratic regime on the horizon in India will be a family fascism, and the re-distribution of the fruits of whatever growth we have, will be further narrowed down as it was under Ayub. The cronies of the ruling family and their cronies would all be benefiting like 57 families were from the Ayub regime. It is because this is the kind of authoritarian regime that is on the horizon in this country that we want to reaffirm, very unsuccessfully perhaps, the case for liberty.

Now, I will talk about first the structural reforms which are referred to in the Agenda. Decentralisation is mentioned as desirable and Mrinal has mentioned some of its dimensions but to concretise this I say that we should push for three types of decentralisation very clearly. One, the geographical type in the sense that the Centre should share more resources and more investment decision responsibilities with the State Governments who should, in turn, share more resources and investment decision responsibilities with the district and lower levels where the action is. Secondly, we want a district government of the same kind as the State Government with some division of labour clearly defined. Then we want decentralisation within the administration. The successful cases of production performance within the public sector are cases like the Fertiliser Corporation etc., where some dynamic managers were appointed, the work was entrusted to a corporation, not to a Ministry, and these corporations, somehow, won and operated with a large measure of autonomy, with finances, with targets, with no day-to-day interference. And these corporations are something we can be proud of.

I would also say that since there is complete holiday from economic policy decision-making in the Central cabinet from time to time, it is desirable that the powers of some of the expert commissions like the Planning Commission and the Finance Commission should be enlarged further. They can have some experts who are committed to distributive justice and operational efficiency to take decisions when politicians are not there. But I just want to add that we should really speak of optimum distribution of decisions between Central and decentralised levels because not all decisions can be decentralised. For instance, the planning of heavy metals, chemicals sector, railway networks, power sector and so on may require more centralisation. But the division of functions outside the national level infrastructure should be mainly decentralistic although what the Agenda says that Central ministries should confine themselves to monitoring, is not possible. Central ministries will have to do a lot more than monitoring.

The second structural change which is mentioned in passing is the organisation of the poor. There is a slip in the Agenda where it says that the poor cannot be organised by the planners. The planners never said that they would organise the poor. The sixth plan document referred to the social workers, trade union workers, political workers, Gandhian workers, Christian workers, university students to do the job. They are. Though this is not of interest to our national newspapers, there are areas in India where people coming from all these groups are trying to organise the poor and this process has to be geographically extended. It has happened in Kerala on a large scale and the Agricultural Worker's Protection Act of the Kerala type needs to be enacted all over the country. It has led to the growth of rural trade unions in Kerala.

Then, there are two structural reforms of the political type which I should like to place on the Agenda. The present system in our politics does not really produce a representative government. The only way towards a legitimate government is through proportional representation in this country by the economic class. The geographical representation in the Centre and in the State legislatures leads to the extent of 70, 80 per cent domination of big landlords, big business and some professionals. Seventy per cent of the rural poor are small farmers, 25 per cent are landless and they are not represented from their point of view. The adult-franchise Government of India is illegitimate. Therefore, constitutional reforms should worry about this problem. This will not happen without proportional representation by the economic class. We also need some representation of knowledge as a special constituency because today our Parliaments are only representative increasingly of the nation's ignorance. So, we want some representation of India's knowledge, and some representation of India's poverty which geographical undifferentiated representation does not produce.

There are certain distributive measures which we should press for very hard as the intelligentsia. First, agrarian reform. I am sorry that the treatment of agrarian reform in the Agenda is very cursory. In fact, one sentence, I hope, is a printing mistake. It says 'new initiatives in the field of land reforms is difficult to imagine as a practical proposition in the current state of our policy'. After having said that land reform may be desirable, this sentence is added. Then why do we ask for land reforms? I think it is not only feasible, it is urgently necessary. In Kerala, both ceiling and tenancy laws, in Karnataka, in Bengal mainly tenancy laws, have been very effectively implemented by a new implementation system under which tribunals were quickly delivering, recognising the tenants, giving them titles, and in these tribunals 30 to 40 per cent of the representation is that of the applicants, crop-sharers and tenants. The revenue administration alone will never implement land reform in India, only tribunals in which the representation of the beneficiaries is 50 per cent can do so. And additional surplus land is still 20 million acres and at least 5 million which is officially identified should be circu-



lated Now, there is an argument that this will lead to great fragmentation I want to say that even with a one-head-tier base it has been proved that it is possible for a family to get over the poverty line And in some parts of the country where the soil is good and high-value crops can be grown, even one fourth, one half-acre would do to help people cross the poverty line with some land base and some supplementary animal husbandry and other activities

Then, I would like to say that in regard to credit and other inputs, we must press for explicit reservations There is a sentence in the Agenda generally against reservation I am very much for reservation I believe that unless we reserve at least half of India's official institutional credit for the small farmers, they won't get it in the queue. And this is a general point we have to have reservations for Harijans, for women, and for all backward communities Without reservation they would not have got even what they have got Then, next, I think a campaign must be launched for extending the employment guarantee principle to the rural workers and rural unemployed throughout the country We cannot ask the unemployed to wait indefinitely or to wait for growth to have multiplied efforts to absorb the huge pool of surplus labour, now 20 million growing by 5 million a year It is the moral, legal responsibility of the State to give them work and it can be done The whole cost of absorbing present unemployed labour will be just Rs 4,000 crores extra, which is one-third, one-fourth of what we are spending on development today every year And if somebody tells me that we cannot spend one-third or one-fourth of India's plan outlay to guarantee Rs 4 a day to the poorest in India, I think we don't mean business about distributive justice.

The minimum needs programme as spelt out in the sixth plan, it is an extension of the fifth plan idea, is a good plan and regardless of the merits of any area, every community in India should be considered entitled to water, power, transport, health and education There should be no benefit cost analysis applied to these things And there's Rs 4,000 crores for it. Then I also believe that the public distribution system should be kept and maintained and there should be a sincere effort for corporate deconcentration And, then, I plead for a fund to give subsistence transport subsidy for the unionisation and organisation of the poor Also, in addition to all other special security forces that we have, we must create a Harijan Security Force, recruited with the non-locals and non-high-caste people to protect the Harijans because this effort to unionise the poor is going to lead to trouble

**C T Kurien** Two things by way of introduction: one is that I come from Madras, so we are moving from the Centre to the periphery now and some differences may come up in that process, and two, in the early stages when the Agenda in cyclostyled form was circulated, I was one of those who did not sign it My major objection was that you cannot prescribe an Agenda for a nation without some diagnosis of the malady. Mrinal had given us some idea of the symptoms of the malady and Raj Krishna has given us

some prescriptions, but I personally believe that a prescription without diagnosis is a very dangerous thing So, I will concentrate on the diagnosis (*Inter-ruption by the Chair* Dr. Kurien, just one more point I want to make for those who weren't here yesterday. We are not discussing the document *per se*. So, please feel free to avoid it You know, just give us the diagnosis without being confused by the document )

The diagnosis, I believe, will have to be historical and go back to pre-Independence days, when capitalism came to India after it developed in the West What happened we all know There was some kind of development, some kind of modernisation, but, in effect, it was conferring economic advantage, economic prosperity and privilege on a small group within the country while also leading to the disintegration of large numbers of trades, the pauperisation of large numbers of people I believe that it is in the nature of capitalism to do this

In the post-Independence period there was a greater internationalisation and intensification of the same process — greater internalisation because earlier much of the benefits of capitalism went outside of the country, greater intensification because after Independence the State itself played a powerful role in this capitalist process In one sense, 1950 to 1980 was a period of growth through the activities of the government, and the growth of the service sector in economy — a good many of us are the product of that expansion From 1950 to 1965, the revival of agriculture and rural society was attempted but failed This is mainly because agriculture could not be stimulated without the non-agricultural inputs which were not readily available at that time Therefore, we turn to the building up of industries, particularly during the second five-year plan period Industry picked up, infrastructure was provided, import substitution was greatly supported This is a period of fairly sustained growth in industry of 6 to 7 to 8 per cent per annum, if I remember the figures Foreign aid flowed in, was utilised Internal savings of the economy at that time were below the investment level

From 1965 to 1980 there was a revival of agriculture via modern technology, non-agriculture inputs, substantial credit facilities — the 'Green Revolution'. Secondly, there was a substantial decline in public investment because of increased defence expenditure and the growing salary commitments of the government. Thirdly, industrial development during this period was left, by and large, to market forces, including the licence Raj — you can always produce a market for licences The demand for industrial products came largely from the growing service sector, and upper-income groups in all sectors of economy Consequently, there has been a shift in the demand, in the composition of output in favour of consumer durables and things of that kind, and also a general decline in the rate of growth of industries, touching almost zero level in recent times. Export promotion was, therefore, considered to be the solution.



Now, what is happening in the 1980s Subsidised agriculture has grown and produced a surplus which is not easy to clear for fear of spoiling the market. Cost of production has gone up because agriculture now depends a great deal on inputs purchased from outside of the agriculture system. Consequently, the small farmer finds himself in an extremely difficult situation. There is a substantial increase in the agricultural labour force, to some extent indicating the pauperisation of the peasantry. There has been no increase in real earnings of agricultural labour, although in some places, as Dr Raj explained the other day, there has been an increase in the wage rate and per capita consumption of food has come down. Secondly, industry cannot find a market. Questions of what to do next have come up and the process of growth of industry has also resorted to such a terrific capital intensification of industry that it is not absorbing labour. Thirdly, there has been a big increase in income and saving of the top 10 per cent, including those in the service sector. Four, continuing inflation which reduces real earnings of fixed-income groups, including the organised sector. Five, domestic savings are in excess of investment with a foreign exchange reserve, and six, growing privatisation of the economy via huge deficits of the government. No managerial revolution is going to solve this. And my objection to the Agenda is that what it proposes is a managerial kind of revolution.

This pattern will continue. Income and wealth of the top 10 per cent will grow. Maybe, of the top 15 per cent or perhaps of the top 20 per cent. The economy will work on the steam generated by the growing incomes and prosperity of this group. There will be greater play of the market forces with the demands of this group determining the forces of production, the pattern of production, much more of export-orientation, greater play for the trans-nationals. This will lead to some kind of growth, some kind of export and some kind of opening up of rural areas and some marginal increase in employment. And the consequences of this will be that the economy and the polity will come increasingly under the control of the producer groups, particularly the big producer groups that Raj Krishna referred to.

Secondly, there will be continuing inflation which initially appears to favour growth and will soon make trade and speculation much more profitable leading to some kind of a runaway inflation. Thirdly, the polity will either tend to disintegrate or to become dictatorial. Now I'll stop here. We must ask ourselves whom do we represent in this whole business, and whose side are we going to take.

**Sailen Ghosh** I am a researcher, now engaged in developing an alternative model of development based on environmental laws. My hypothesis is that if we understand the environmental laws better and incorporate the natural processes, development will be much less expensive, longer lasting and more equitable. I would like to add to the Agenda from that perspective. We have not asked ourselves questions that

should have been asked first. What is the kind of society that we want to give ourselves and what is the kind of life that we would like to lead as individuals? You see, in this whole discussion we are not at all discussing technological philosophy because we think that there can be differences in political philosophy, in economic philosophy, social philosophy, but not in technological philosophy. The votaries of free enterprise and socialism accept what goes in the name of modern technology as inevitable. The result can only be centralisation, concentration of power. Authoritarianism has a socio-economic base and these technologies limit access to a few, both in terms of resources for production and also for enjoyment of the products. The present technology is a product of some physical sciences and some engineering disciplines, so with it you cannot have real democracy or participation of people.

Here we are discussing decentralisation, but scientific agriculture depends upon inputs, chemical fertilizers, pesticides and electricity. Now, if your chemical manufacturers and your generators of electricity decide something, your farming is entirely dependent on that. What can your village-level or block-level or zilla-level panchayat do except suck their thumbs. The basic inputs are controlled centrally. Therefore, you have to have some kind of concept of technology. Really, if you refer to the natural process, then you will find something at the ground itself which gives you strength. So, while you talk of decentralisation or democracy, you will have to address yourself to the basic question of technology as you discuss the political and social philosophy.

Now, the role of the market. Both the votaries of revolution and of free enterprise want to expand the market. My attitude is that I would not like increased vegetable production, mill production, fish production to go to the city until the needs of the poorest man in the locality are satisfied. But nobody is saying that the efficiency of production should be consistent with the preservation of resources today. Similarly, the concept of economy of scale. Here also I would like to limit their scale at a particular level in the interest of the widest participation of the people.

Then the State sector. I can say from experience that to call the State sector immediately public sector is very wrong. State enterprise will have to acquire many qualifications before graduating into a public enterprise. We need to have a State sector, a private sector and a strong cooperative sector.

**Kirit Parikh:** I am a Professor of Economics at the Indian Statistical Institute. It is always difficult to speak after Raj Krishna because he makes most of the points one would like to make. Nonetheless, I will reiterate some of them. The first point is the basic consensus about democracy and distributive justice. There is some internal contradiction about distributive justice in a society where changes take place in a gradualistic manner which one usually associates with democratic processes. It is here that one has to really



make a clear statement that it is only within a free democratic framework that the poor in this country are going to have any chance whatsoever to acquire bread. I think, the most important freedom that the poor need in this country is the freedom of alternative employment, even if it costs 4,000 crores or 5,000 crores. Only when we have an alternative employment guaranteeing a certain minimum level of income, can you reject an exploitative opportunity of employment. One also needs to worry about what kind of growth you would have, and here the emphasis on development of small-scale or decentralised industrial structure is important. We would find a number of industries in which the small-scale sector would be economically attractive, and generate more employment. Also required would be to identify these sectors and reserve them. We may also have to play some role as the style-setters in society by subscribing or promoting the products of only such sectors. Each one of us could thereby generate two or three extra persons' employment.

I have some disagreement with the way Mrinal characterised the problem of public and private sectors. Once discussing with a Planning Commission economist, I was arguing that in some sense the private sector industries behave more efficiently than the public sector. And he said, 'But at what cost?' And I asked 'What cost?' He said one of his friends working in the private sector was under tension all the time of being fired if he didn't work. Now, if that is the kind of cost that we do not consider acceptable, I think there is not much hope of developing any efficiency, any kind of industrialisation. It is most important here to find the causes which make the public sector and even large private network type organisations in some sense function inefficiently. I think here that organisational structure, the style of management that we have in the public sector projects or in large projects per se is the crux of the problem. A well-run organisation taken over by the public sector, with the same management and technical staff suddenly degenerates into an inefficient one because most public organisations have no clearly specified goals. One must also agree in advance on what one expects from the managers of public sector projects and one can also give further incentives such as profit-sharing or what have you. This is not to say that I am not in favour of further expansion of the public sector.

I will disagree a bit with Mrinal about the concept of decentralisation that he gave—that it was not just a substitution of rules by discretion. But rules have also to be enforced and usually you find bureaucrats enforcing these. I would go to a separate definition and say decentralisation would mean perhaps substitution of rules which are administered by many local bureaucrats in some sense and so far as possible, substitution of rules by instruments which are self-enforcing.

**Govind Rao Deshpande** I just want to make two points on Assam. The Gandhi Peace Foundation team

recently spent five to six days there and I would like to comment on some of the points made. One is about 'foreigners'. I want to say that this is a 150 year old problem. When people came from the old Bengal then, they were called Mymen-Sindhis. They came to work, some returned some remained. After partition and then after the Bangladesh war this took alarming dimensions. Particularly those from East Bengal who stayed to work—in fact there is one zilla which is overwhelmingly non-Assamese. In fact it is difficult to say what is Assamese culture now—so swamped is it. Then the economic opportunity has also diminished in comparison to other regions due to the Centre's neglect. This is the reality. To reverse it, at least the flow from outside has to stop, people have to be returned and the feeling of economic neglect has to be remedied because the movement is complete—an entire people are participating. The non-Assamese are scared of being turned out whether it be the Bihar rickshaw-walla or the U.P. trader. Even the army is considered Indian and not Assamese. The people feel that unless the movement of oil, jute, wood and tea is not stopped no one will pay heed to their demands. Even the political parties have left the scene because they can't face the solutions. This is the situation. The economic grievances must be looked into impartially. Secondly, the cultural grievances must be looked at by a Commission. They must have the power to bring in changes. And the Assamese people must have a voice in their economic and industrial structure.

**Balwant Reddy** I want to say just a few things about what Raj Krishna said about trading liberty for poverty. I think we have to consider whether these two are indivisible because my fear is that if not the present regime, some future regime can always sell the idea to the intellectuals. This is rather disturbing, particularly in view of the statements which even the judges of the Supreme Court are making about committing themselves to the abolition of poverty, which, in other words, means bending laws to suit the authority. The other problem which worries me is that Mrinal's solution of decentralisation somehow doesn't follow from his diagnosis simply because if State apparatus is being used by the ruling classes, even if you decentralise power as we have experienced in Panchayati Raj institutions and elsewhere, the ruling classes will continue to exercise the same power in these decentralised institutions. We can't ignore that.

Raj Krishna suggested something more about public enterprises, managers and so on. They should be made to exercise the authority which isn't conferred on them. You see, I am associated with some enterprises. I find that the top managers are not willing to exercise the authority which is given to them within the present framework. Now the reasons seem to be deeper. We have to understand why people even when they are given the authority, do not want to exercise it. Just legislating about decentralisation is not enough.

Then we had this quota system for Scheduled Castes in the services. Now, have we solved this



problem of Scheduled Castes by giving quotas? Was that the right solution and does it continue to be so? These are the things which I think we should have considered rather deeply. Lastly, what role can intellectuals play? Can we organise the poor? We seem to ignore the role which political parties are playing — Left, Centre, Right. Are they playing the role which we expect of them? I don't think we are going to organise at the grass roots. Let us not be under any illusions of any kind.

**Balraj Mehta** I am a journalist with the 'Economic and Political Weekly' and the 'Indian Express'. The key thing which strikes me about this document and the discussions is that even though we talk a great deal of radicalism and a re-structuring, we are really afraid of any real big change. I see it as new conservatism rather than radical thought. Two sentences in this document — one, about organisation of the poor, and the other, in spite of Mrinal's denial that we are anti-labour, the kind of thing that has been written about organised labour. What have the organised working class got? At best only neutralisation of the erosion of their real income in the last 20 years. They cannot be said to have increased their real earnings, in spite of higher productivity, higher production and everything. Therefore to make this a major section in this document itself shows how worried we are whenever any unorganised section begins to organise itself and is able to gain its rights. This is one thing which struck me very strongly. I am not saying that inter-union rivalry is not there, there is a great deal of fragmentation of the trade union movement, the political element is there. But the question of organisations of the poor, of the working people will raise many questions and at that stage intellectuals will have to take a stand, particularly in the present situation when the attempt of the government, the monopolists and owner class is to put the entire blame of lower production or of economic crisis on the organised working class. And we take sides here with the monopolists rather than with the workers. We are not willing to grant organised workers what we ask for the upper classes, we don't take in the contribution they make to the total position.

Another thing, whenever we talk of all the various structural reforms, at best we are saying with a sense of great nostalgia that there was some kind of a national consensus in the Nehru era and we are trying to build another national consensus. I mean, we are trying to go back. We are forgetting all the changes that have taken place in this country — social, economic, political — in the last 30 years, and the polarisation resulting from it. We are afraid of polarisation. I think that is an attitude of an intellectual who wants soft options and hopes to find a solution within the framework rather than challenging that framework and aligning with new forces that might be arising. It seems to me that political parties in that sense are more responsive to the situation that is taking place. They ask — now the fragmentation that is taking place in our political formation is, to some extent, much closer to the kind of class conflicts, class ten-

sions, the class alignments that are taking place, than an all-purpose general organisation Nehru used to represent. That era has passed. Society has become more fragmented. Tensions within it — class, social, economic — have grown to a point where now clashes will take place. Political parties will align themselves more and more with certain sectional interests, class interests. So, let us not talk of a new consensus of the type that Nehru represented. Let us try as intellectuals to side with the political, social, economic forces, class forces.

**Anand Kumar** In the 50s and 60s every economic question of ours was to be solved by the word, socialism, which we have killed by over-use, and taken a step backwards. Now we think we can remedy that through decentralisation which is closely associated with Gandhiji and the national movement. From the discussion, I fear we have lost the concept of decentralisation and, attached to it, the idea of economic dignity. The economic problem is similar to the political problem. The five-year plans were the economic aspect of our freedom movement.

We should start with the fact that those sections of our people who joined the political movement under J P, were not given the membership of the economic community after the Janata Party came to power — or under Charan Singh. When Morarji was asked why economic democracy had not been incorporated, he said the people would answer that question in a couple of years themselves. I want to just say a few words about the interaction between the political and the economic community. The government is the largest employer but it has no mediating power between the forward and backward sections of the economic community — but only with big business. But big business is also a product of many historical forces.

What should we do about economic action? It is wrong to say the worker is getting something, the peasant is getting something — he will say, so are you. Obviously otherwise they would all be dead. But what price the organised worker has to pay for strikes — and bonus. Have we thought of that?

Jyoti Basu has tried some change — but everywhere else the economic aspects are weak. I'll therefore suggest that those indulging in economic analysis should also think in terms of its political implications — how can this analysis involve them in political action. At this critical juncture when fascism is at our doorstep, we should, in the context of the existing economic system try to underline all those potential political groups which are victims of the system. The crisis is the crisis of the transmission between the economic and political community.

**Satish Jha** My question basically relates to Raj Krishna's intervention. The fact that he would accept authoritarianism for the eradication of poverty is a point of concern. Then, if you are rejecting a model of authoritarianism, you are rejecting both Left and



Right models at the same time. It is not just possible that if the model gives you growth, as in the case of South Korea, you will accept authoritarianism as well. My second point is related to the question of land reforms. It is part of the capitalists' development strategy that even those who talk of re-distribution of capital say that 100 crores should be the maximum limit. When you talk of land reforms, you say 18 acres. I mean, there has to be some kind of balance maintained between these two sectors.

**Sanjeev Baruah:** I am a student of political science. I must register my dissent on the implication of the document that the working class is pampered a lot. It is important to remember that the railway strike of 1974 was the strike of the organised working class. Their struggle put them on the side of democracy against authoritarianism. Then, it is not true to say that they have made massive gains. In fact, most analyses I have seen of Indian working class wages show that their wages are on the decline. And if we, indeed, are believers that the present crisis is a structural crisis, a systematic crisis, let's get out of this notion that somebody is getting more because somebody is getting less. Also in the Indian reality the dichotomy between the organised urban working class and the unorganised rural working class is not that strong really. The important political implications are that the urban working class is on the side of democracy. If we don't recognise it, then like Deshpande said yesterday that the absence of the word 'socialism' in this document might enable those who are believers in raw power to exploit the cause, we also would be misunderstood.

The second point I would like to mention is on Assam. I am from the area and I think it is important to realise that the military rule proclaimed yesterday in Assam was backed by arguments provided by the opposition. It was the Left and not merely the CPM who shouted that the RSS is involved, the CIA is involved. A few days ago I saw a statement signed by various Lok Dal, Janata youth groups expressing similar sentiments. So this ignorance bothers me, I mean it is not the fault of the Assamese people. The issue is at least 100 years old. It was a central issue of Assam politics in the nationalist movement. It is ignorance of this which determines our reaction to political issues and I feel people who claim conviction in democracy should be responsible for their utterances. Much of the opposition on the Assam issue is not responsible. They have to accept that they provided the argument which Mrs Gandhi is using today for the military intervention in Assam.

**Rami Chhabra:** I am not an economist but I felt there were a couple of points that I wanted to bring to your attention before I raise very specific issues that are fundamental to the economics which we are talking about today. One is the feeling that the concentration of raw power during the Emergency has continued through the Janata rule and still continues at the lower levels. At the height of Janata rule, I was almost arrested in Mathura because the television

team with which I was, was taken to be a tourist group and some Daroga, who had been harassing the entire Mathura community, thought he would make some more money out of us. I just want to say that this kind of raw power has been exercised in our society and continues to be exercised and what is happening at the Centre today is not really a matter of such acute concern as what happens to people out in the rural areas of India who have no recourse to rectification as people like you and I have. And I think the point that Raj Krishna made this morning that this is really a forum of organising the non-political intelligentsia is what really should concern us today because I think that the issues that confront us are so big, that there is no scope for divisiveness.

The major problem at the base of our economic issues is the population question. I haven't heard anybody this morning mention the fact that much of development is being totally negated because you have a situation in which 330 million Indians have been added since Independence. It is just a little less than the total number that existed when we became independent and this is also the number of the people that are below the poverty line. We have a situation today where we are really running and going backwards at the same time. I would like to relate this with the question of being apolitical because I would like to submit to you that the excesses of action are no less than the excesses of inaction. The document that we have been discussing today has talked of excesses of the Emergency period but in the three years since the Emergency, inaction in that field has been as much if not more disastrous to the people. I am not holding any brief for what happened during the Emergency but I would only submit that it happened in certain pockets. We are not asking for a return to that but let's look also at the consequences of turning a blind eye to the last three years—people are today too terrified to touch this issue again because it is being politicised.

The document says that the issue is not of the poor being responsible for the re-productive problems of the country, but I would like to put to you that these poor who need our sympathy, on the other hand, cannot become exploiters within their own system, that they cannot win this prosperity at the cost of the women and the children in their own society. We have one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world—573 per 100,000. You have a situation in which children are born who do not get the rights which we are talking about. The right of the child not to be born becomes even more fundamental.

The whole integrated child welfare service scheme covers some 10 million and you have 21 million children being born every year. So, I would put it to you that one of the things that somebody pointed out yesterday is that we neglect the long term and the short term comes up in front of us. That is so far as the future is concerned, but even the present is going



to be unsupportable for women and children. And one other thing. There is now ample evidence to show that women who were guaranteed equal rights, opportunities and status under the Constitution have remained unequal in all spheres of national life. The benefit secured by a small minority of educated elite women against the large masses of women doubly disadvantaged by poverty and social inequality, is basically unjust. This has consequences that are disastrous not only to the female half but the whole of society.

Specific measures will now have to be taken to remedy the conditions. All development planning must at the pre-planning stage study the specific situational needs of women and girls, the possible impact the proposed development programmes would have on their condition with a view to avoid any negative impact and with a mandate to create positive betterment of the condition of women. There must be a commitment to earmark adequate and effective proportionable resources for programmes for women's development within each sector at the national and local levels, and physical and financial targets assigned to all development agencies to ensure that the benefits of the programmes flow equally to men and women. The nation must make every effort to effect the deep attitudinal changes needed so that women are enabled to come out of a deprived and discriminated category. The challenge is to work for women's integration and active participation in development as beneficiaries and contributors at all levels and to win for them justice, equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities. This will in itself help fight the major social evils that plague traditional Indian society, the economically depressed and other minority groups whose plight is causing us general concern today.

**Ram Chander Gandhi:** From Hyderabad. I teach philosophy and I know nothing about economics beyond this that without struggle nothing can be achieved on the economic front or any other front. Now I do think on that front of women, it's about time that there was struggle, and not merely consensus. And about population too. It is not enough to say that what happened during the three years of the Janata rule is as bad as the other thing, the excesses. What did not happen was any mobilisation of thinking people, any attempt on their part to go into the country and persuade people to discover perhaps new ways of disciplining the size of families. Unless thousands of us decide to talk to the people through letters, newspapers, personal communications — adopt villages, nothing will happen.

I don't see any hope of a humane solution to these two problems of population and the atrocities on women. In a sense, Mother Teresa has shown the way. Even those who disagree with her, critics of birth control, I think must wait. Because without that kind of contact with the people which is a contact of love and sacrifice, I don't see anything happening on this front for ever. If this group is not able to decide on a programme of action away from Delhi, unless decen-

tralisation means that in our lives we have got to move about from areas of attraction and power and comfort and lethargy, I don't think any thing is going to be achieved on the population and women's front or on distributive justice. I don't think by persuading government or by electing government we are going to achieve this. We simply have to devise ways of living honourably in a country where the majority are grossly inhumanly deprived. And if we can do this in cities, we will have to discover modes of cooperative living. We simply have to declare to one another, not necessarily to the government, our incomes, our sources, our needs, otherwise the message of distributive justice will be delivered with violence and thoughtlessness by various governments and not by people.

Now, decentralisation is vitally important, but equally important is, I think, what might be called integration. What is happening in Assam is the result of insufficient integration of a certain kind. How many of us have friends in Assam? So, a new mode of integration has to be evolved and we will simply bring, I think, a new sort of 'Jana Gana Mana' which celebrates not merely areas but people. In practical terms, it will mean learning more languages or campaigning for a script, songs. If you say 'let's put some economic teeth into the whole thing', how will you without the voice, the speech, the feelings? But, in the end it is a challenge on the economic front and on the other fronts. Modes of struggle will have to be found able to sustain us for, say, the next 20, 30 years. What is it that keeps a man or a woman on the attack for something like 20 years — the willingness to talk about struggle, modes of sacrifice, not joyless sacrifice, mind you, and modes of living. But we can find modes of joyous sacrifice. That is the way to tackle the communal problem to learn something from poor Muslims if we are Hindus, poor Hindus, poor Christians, poor Adivasis. And if we can't do this, regionalism or communalism of one kind or other will destroy us. If we are not going to discover and discuss modes of struggle, with fairly clear indications of the kind of sacrifice involved and offer our help to those who have larger homes, open our doors for others to stay there, I see no hope for our country of any kind.

## SOCIAL

**Kuldip Nayar:** I am a journalist. The speeches on economic development and the political structure have missed out the development of man. I think all these isms whether socialism, communism or Gandhism — are a means to an end and to me that end is man, the individual. Dr Raj Krishna this morning, said, 'if you could promise me food for 70 or 80 per cent of people, I do not mind if the press is censored, if the academicians are shackled, or if intellectuals are denied their right to speak. The question is that even if you have enough to eat, that does not mean that you should be denied the right to speak. After all, the whole movement of 1975 through 1977 was for that purpose.



Now I shall go on to the next aspect which is social. The two basic elements in it are health and education. To improve his economic life we must improve his health and education. But I will confine myself only to two problems which are related to this — the plight of the Muslim minority and the plight of Harijans. The Muslims in this country are roughly 12 per cent of the population. We find that after partition, they are still not generally trusted. They have to carry the label of their loyalty to this country definitely on their chests and show it all the time. During the 1954 communal riots in Delhi, I stayed for 10 days with a Muslim worker to study what the situation was on the ground. There, the police would come through the door at 4 in the morning, they would not bother about the women, they would just barge in and say 'Is that man here?' This was the man who was alleged to have fired some shots during the riot. I don't know whether they were looking for fire-arms or something like that. The cumulative effect their behaviour had on me was that the people were not being really treated as citizens. Remarks were flung like 'Pakistani hein'. This only made them more tense, nervous driving them to say 'do we really belong to this country? Where do we go from here?' In Aligarh University you find another kind of narrow, assertive, almost militant attitude. Now, on the one side the community is very submissive, on the other, people are thinking in terms of Islamic fundamentalism.

A third category is becoming very radical because they think they have no stake in the Hindu society. This problem remains with us 30 years after Independence. If you go to Pakistan exaggerated reports of Hindu-Muslim riots are hurled at you. Three years ago, somebody asked me 'how can we undo Pakistan'. I said you don't have to undo Pakistan. That would be very chauvinistic, jingoistic or whatever the Hindu Mahasabha line is. But these borders can become soft if in India you create a society which is really secular.

When you come to caste there are the Harijans. Newspapers are reporting incidents because some of the Harijans are realising that just waiting in the queue doesn't help. They must assert ourselves. Of course, in Bihar fragmentation is taking place so fast, the backward classes are themselves divided. More and more people want reservations. Unlike Raj Krishna, I am fundamentally against reservation because I think reservations have a tendency to perpetuate themselves. In 1950 we said that there would be reservation for Harijans for 10 years but it continues on and on with all kinds of concessions. Think of the poor of other castes. The time has surely come when we should have an economic criteria instead of going merely by caste. Also, that when we talk of Harijan and tribal reservation, we forget that the constitution-makers, if you look through the debate, were hoping that the economic condition would definitely improve with time. I would like to end by saying that we are spending too much time on material development and are

forgetting the man. As Jawaharlal Nehru said 'the individual was more important than any system'.

**L C Jain** We only talk of untouchability, but there are communities who are categorised as unseeable. There is also unseeability. Now these are the burdens of thousands of years. If we have to continue to struggle at the social level with a problem which is basic and essential, we must realise that the equality which the Constitution has offered means only one thing — that they have a right to vote like everybody else. But they are being prevented from voting by what is called booth-capturing or other devices. They would rather forego their vote than forego whatever means of livelihood they have or whatever little security of physical survival they have. On the one hand, legally they have been conferred with equality but gross inequality persists so far as their day-to-day life is concerned. I will make that issue No 1. They are treated not merely as second-rate citizens but as some kind of third-rate human beings.

Now, we must look into this whole system of reservations. Take special scholarships for education. If despite these scholarships the extent of literacy is only 30 per cent, then who are the chaps who are illiterate? Not surely the well-to-do! In one of the surveys of Antodaya families in Eastern U.P., about 3,500 families, not only was their per capita income found to be Rs 11 as against Rs 1,100 of the biggest zamindar in that area and Rs 55 the average per capita income in Uttar Pradesh, but their average literacy rate was one-third of U.P.'s. Now, you can be very proud of what U.P.'s literacy rate is. For women in the poorest households, the literacy rate was zero. Now, in terms of the quality of life that Kuldip referred to, I think the biggest weapon in the hands of the poor is education. Their own capacity to advance depends very much on their access to education. In that sense the recent adult education programme, whatever be its defects — organisational or content wise could have got across to the people.

The other that also arises from our tradition is the indignity with which women as a class are treated, cutting across income groups, and that half of the population can be treated as second-rate citizens or in some villages I have even heard them described as cattle. When I say why not also get some women talk to them. They say '*Janwar Hai*'. If you have a meeting of the Gandhian groups of social workers in Bihar, they say '*Yehan ki rawaj aisi hai, aurton ko nahin bulana chahiye*'. This is not only what is coming traditionally but in terms of even those groups which are now involved in social reform movements. They feel that women should be left alone. But they cannot be left alone.

On the economic side, we have lakhs of carpet weavers. They are making what are called wall-to-wall carpets, but they have no wall of their own. We have two Indias really which is also causing social tensions. There was some reference made to the organised labour. I have nothing to say against that.



But you have millions and millions of people who are self-employed. Nobody guarantees their employment, their daily wages or monthly income, let alone bonus, security of one kind or the other, retirement benefits. But even when it comes to minimum amenities, you will have housing built for industrial labour, but not for the handicraft sector which delivers exports of a thousand crores a year. In the last one-and-a-half years that I have been chairman of the Handicrafts Board, I have not been able to get a single house built for a single craftsman. You need industrial estates for modern small-scale industry, but for these people, nothing. Yet, whether sick with malaria, living in slums, they must produce a beautiful thing. In Agra, I have seen a family where children are kept in the street to accommodate the big carpet loom within the little cottage they have. So, they can deliver this kind of munificence to society but their children will have to be on the street for this purpose. I called a conference of the Scheduled Caste Corporation about three months ago. I asked one simple question: 'How much money have you spent in the last seven years on the establishment of the Corporation? How much money have you delivered to Harijans?' And you will be shocked to know that in one of the States Rs. 24,00,000 were spent on the establishment in seven years, properly audited, approved by finance, Assembly, Parliament — the amount of money given to the Harijans from the Corporation was Rs. 1,000 total in seven years. Why? The rules for giving loans to the Harijans have not been finalised!

I will make one last point since everybody does make one last point and that was where Ram Chhabra compared the two periods of family planning. One is concerned about the population problem, but what was done during the Emergency was a family destruction programme and the setback that it created was very damaging. The two programmes that did follow later, one of community health work and the other of the food-for-work programme brought some income to these families. So, if Ram Chhabra or anybody else is very anxious to control the population as a solution to the poverty problem, they must think only in terms of the democratic framework — persuading families, sitting with them, educating them. Family planning is not family planning from the Health Ministry here.

**Peter D'Souza:** I am studying in Jawaharlal Nehru University. In the light of what L.C. Jain has said, I want to make a small comment on the national press. Ram Chhabra in the morning spoke of how today we see raw power being concentrated in the urban areas and we are shocked with it. This is an ordinary incident in the daily life of the poor which has been with us all the while. Now, I feel that the national press has inherited a bias which is urban-based. So far, we have said that the poor should be organised. The poor are not informed of their rights. Yet, it is the national press which today plays a very important role in influencing policy, in determining the values of people who make decisions. Now, if there is an incident in an urban area connected with, say, families that are upper-middle class, the

national press makes it a national issue. Not so with a family of a poor farmer. Now, if today we are concerned with dissemination of information to the poor, then those of us who have links with the national press, have access to institutions that disseminate information, have to adopt the position whereby adequate space must be given to the violation of those values which we are fighting to uphold in the rural areas because very little of what happens there ever comes to life. If the intelligentsia does not feel upset when the young children of a farmer from a backward area are missing, but is concerned if the same thing happens to a person whose father is a lawyer in the Supreme Court, there is something wrong in their values. The national press can help change there. So, if daily, weekly, monthly it consciously keeps a column or an area reserved for human-interest stories about the day in the life of an ordinary peasant, it will be a step forward.

**V V John:** I shall begin with a point about some of the idioms used in the discussion, which make very inconvenient disclosures about the way our minds are working. One of them was the phrase about the need for educating our masters. I think it is an impudent piece of hypocrisy to talk about the people of this country as masters and then presume to schoolmaster them. When we talk of a dictatorial bureaucrat as a public servant, everybody knows that he is nobody's servant and so we should learn to call these things by their real names. If the people are ignorant, they should be educated. Don't insult them in the process by calling them masters. The expression is completely uncalled for. There is an unfortunate phrase which has even got into our draft of the Agenda, and that is the device by which the large numbers that now rush into the universities could be siphoned off — that is the phrase used — siphoned off into various vocations, courses and so on. That phrase is very telling. You immediately know the kind of attitude from which it springs—how can you siphon off human beings? But nothing to beat the Kothari report, where, apart from all the other criticism, several times there is offensive reference to the masses. Immediately you know the attitude the draftsmen had—the education of the masses as something apart from themselves.

It is refreshing that we are now coming round to the view that we ought to have a system by which a kind of common school pattern will be evolved. In the Agenda paper the way this has been suggested seems very impracticable and we ought to take the bold step of suggesting that all post-secondary education in this country should be fully paid for by its beneficiaries, and all education until that point ought to be a charge on the State. Now, if you want special facilities and are willing to pay it is much better not to interfere with such arrangements. But the State should work out the per capita outlay that would be required to give every boy and girl education at least upto the 14th year and earmark all the funds for that and if there is any money to be spent on higher education, you say 'yes'. At the most, you can get it on credit and as soon as you have a taxable income, return the money to the tax-payer. Unless we have



the courage to say this, I do not suppose that the neighbourhood school or the common school system will come in. What we have built up is a kind of pyramid of privileges and we are not thinking of education in the right way. Adult education, for instance, ought to be viewed as confrontation with inequality and social injustice. If confronted that way, I think there will be a tremendous ferment all over the country. In fact, the way in which literacy is taken in hand is the way I learnt the Urdu script. I first learnt how to write 'laa', then 'lala', then 'tala' and made a complete sentence 'Lala, tala la.' That was very nearly the end of my literacy effort. Now how can you get hold of 25-year-old and 30-year-old people and feed such infantile stuff to them. On the other hand, I was listening the other day to an expert on consumer protection. I think that adult educators should go out into the villages and talk about consumer protection and all the frauds that are committed on the customers by our dealers and so on.

That should be the beginning of education in terms of very good economics and political science and later on grown-up people will understand that if they could read and write they would have a greater mastery over these problems. And let us never forget that freedom has really only one meaning — being in charge of oneself. And to think of it in terms of something that is rationed out from a government office or some political system is wrong. Unfortunately, our education is not ambitious enough, and our revolutions are also so timid that it reminds me always of a passage in 'Saint Augustin's Confessions'. Saint Augustin had been a profligate man and finally he was converted. He wanted to change his ways but in that period of transition his prayer was always, 'Lord, give me continence, but don't give it to me today. Not just yet.' We are all for revolution, total and otherwise, but we are hoping that our own promotions and timing, wherever we are, will not be impeded by the coming of the revolution. A reversal of this attitude is necessary if we are going to do anything meaningful in education.

**Mahesh Rangarajan:** Even as we gather here in this hall to discuss an Agenda for India, there is a group of people up in the hills of Uttarakhand who have their own agenda. They are fighting an unholy trinity of foresters, police officers and politicians, who are out to disrupt the lifestyle and the very livelihood of the people of the whole of Garhwal and Uttarakhand. To you and to me, a forest is just a place which is full of wood which can be used for sports goods, for furniture and for other things. To a man in the village, a forest is the very basis of his livelihood. It gives him firewood to cook his food. Take away the forest, the land is eroded. Who suffers? The farmer, the poorest people in the village? It is they who suffer. The manner in which forest destruction has been going on in the Himalayas, in the other hilly areas of India, is something deplorable. On the one hand, we have a government which invests crores of rupees in flood control, soil conservation and forest exploitation. And on the other hand, we have that same government moving in massively to destroy

forests. We have forgotten the basic rule of development, that it cannot be sustainable unless we remember that resources have to be conserved. Forests are a renewable resource only if you renew them. Cut off forests massively in the hills, the amount of silt which is washed on to the plains increases, the river bed is higher, floods increase. For every 25 crores you invest in forestry, you are investing the equivalent of 250 crores in flood control, in the making of dams, embankments, bunds etc. It is, perhaps, one of the greatest tragedies that the intelligentsia of this country has come about to believe that conservation is a fad which is fit only for the first world. This is a canard which must be finished off.

We have to remember one thing if we are to achieve a sensible form of development: it is vital that each person, every man, woman and child, receives what is our inalienable right — the right to clean air, to pure water, to uncontaminated food and the right to a clean environment. Today, we have a system which denies people this right. We have a thermal power plant which gives out harmful sulphur dioxide. We have a government structure, politicians, bureaucrats, media who say that pollution is a fad, who forget that because of that sulphur dioxide there is a worker, there is a slumdweller who is suffering from, say, bronchitis. We have a structure in which we are unwilling to invest in sewer cleaning systems. We dump sewage into the river without cleaning it. Who suffers? It is the people living downstream. It is the fishermen. If we have rivers where fish cannot live, is it possible that water in that river is safe enough for human beings to drink? Is it not a fact that we have the technological means to prevent this pollution? There is anti-pollution machinery which can stop the sulphur dioxide coming out from that chimney. There are sewage systems which aren't that costly, which can clean up that sewage and maintain the purity of our environment. But it seems that we are a society, which from top to bottom, is ignoring the cardinal rules that the right to clean environment is an inalienable one. Mr Chairman, I would like to draw your attention to one fact — there is no mention, whatsoever, of conservation in this Agenda and I feel it must be mentioned because unless we adopt this policy of development without pollution, of conservation, which can be sustainable, we can never achieve any social welfare system or any sound economy ever. Unless we people begin to re-think, there is no one who is going to re-think.

**Radhakrishna:** To the points which both L. C. Jain and Kuldip Nayar expressed as their concerns, permit me to add two or three which should form the agenda for future consideration. One is the possibility of rapid disintegration in the country. What is happening in Assam, the entire North-Eastern area, and possibly even in J & K? Even the sentiments expressed in Tamil Nadu make one feel that there is this lessening of the idea of integration today. This is something we should find answers to.

The other disturbing thought is how the ordinary man, the poor man, will reach out and get heard.



What can we do to articulate his problems. How does he find a place in the formulation of our Agenda? In the last decade not merely Hindu, Muslim and Christian, but all sorts of communalism has grown, partly due to the forward or backward theories, partly due to the political electoral processes. What do we do about it?

As one sat listening to the debate, one found a certain feeling of happiness that we were not tinkering with issues but talking about the totality of societies. Certainly, this system is on the verge of a breakdown. I thought one of the objects of the J P movement was really to give it a kick. The Emergency was a prop and gave the Janata only a crease in the system without breaking it. How do you demolish this system, create a lack of faith in it so that more and more people are ready for the alternative system? If we tinker with it here and there, and not create enough disregard for it, the chances of accepting a total change are less. So, part of our agenda is also to create a total lack of faith so that the collapse comes sooner.

It is true that any system is as good as the men operating it. Here, education comes in, and education without action, and action without sanction — these are some of the questions that have been raised. While we look forward to answers, education not in the sense in which John ridiculed it but for ourselves, our peers, our friends, our colleagues, not merely the masters of the masses. Educating ourselves first of all in the sort of society we want to bring in. I think unless a package of education, action and sanctions, binding sanctions, unless this package is thought of, then education will be bankrupt and our talking of this total change, new society, alternatives would also be bankrupt.

**Romila Thapar** I teach history at the Jawaharlal Nehru University. I just like to make three fairly brief points relating to the section on education in the Agenda, which points need to be raised and discussed at a gathering like this or at some stage later on. One finds that there is a decisive sloppiness about the way in which education has been treated since Independence — sloppiness which is sometimes casual, sometimes ignorant, sometimes ambiguous. We keep on talking about educational inputs into planning and into building a new society but there has really been very little serious work done on what should go into these inputs and how the proportions should work out.

Now, one of the issues raised in the document which needs to be discussed further is the question of the proportion of outlay on primary, secondary and higher education. It is not enough to say that all three streams should be given attention. I think we have come to a point of priorities and my own personal feeling would be that primary and secondary education need to be strengthened far far more than higher education, partly because many of the injustices, the undemocratic qualities and inequalities that we have been talking about, would be better treated at this level rather than at the higher education level if I may quote just one instance.

Some of us are faced with the problem of reservation. This, in many ways is a tragic one because out of those who come in on reservation some do extremely well, but some go out with a complete shattering of confidence for no known reason at all of their own. It is extremely necessary, therefore, that the major input should be in primary and secondary education which should be so strengthened that resources are better controlled and channelled. This again leads me to the question of academic autonomy. This is related to the fact that you have limitation of funds for higher education and those funds tend to get diluted in the number of under-graduate colleges and universities which are open very often for reasons more political than educational. An attitude develops then where people come to treat the colleges and universities as an additional wing of governmental bureaucracy. The same hierarchies are maintained, the same timidity, the same fear of doing anything which might upset government directives.

I don't think we should beat about the bush that elite groups in every society, in all time, have been different, separate, aloof and people controlling policy. But I think if we are going to come to terms with this, we have to also accept the fact that there has to be a much more careful investment of resources, which will allow an atmosphere to develop in which the academic expression will be one that is independent and autonomous. Sometimes the argument is raised that since all the universities are anyway financed by the Government, the academic is, therefore, responsible to the government and is virtually a government servant. I think this is a complete misreading of the situation because let us not forget that in a modern society there is a different situation from perhaps what existed in traditional societies, and that is, if the government is financing education, it is as dependent on the expertise and knowledge which is provided through these channels, particularly at the level of higher education as the specialist concern or dependent on government financing for resources and it is a two-way process which is being fully, perhaps, accepted by academics in most of our universities.

The third point on which a very strong statement needs to be made is the question of language. Yesterday people talked about the need to speak in an Indian language, to have educational tradition in an Indian language — fair enough. But sometimes what we do to our own languages is as elitist and obscurantist as what happens in a situation where one is using English. For example, what one might call AIR Hindi is certainly not the kind of Hindi that can be understood in the villages. I have on occasions had to translate news bulletins to people in villages. So I think there is a vested interest in language as much as in any thing else and we have to take this into consideration, for languages are very often created for particular purposes not always literary or cultural.

Also, the logic of linguistic States is one in which the regional languages will come to the fore, have



come to the fore. We are, for all practical purposes, now educating in the regional languages. Will it not be better then perhaps to come to terms with this and accept that possibly the best way of understanding the linguistic situation is one in which we have education in the regional language with possibly a bilingualism. Obviously, many of us would prefer bilingualism in English at the secondary level because this would, in fact, not only enrich the regional language but would, in fact, extend as it were the vision of education to something more than merely a parochial vision. But we should come out very forcefully on the question of which language we think should be taught at the primary school level, which at the secondary school level and ultimately what effect this would have on education as a whole.

**Sudindra Bhadoria:** We have been discussing the problems of the Harijans and backward classes but Mrs. Chhabra has correctly pointed out that women find no place in the Agenda. This is a great drawback because our society, what with the cases of mass rape, etc., has treated women as outcasts. One of the reasons why I respect Gandhiji's leadership is because he, along with Marx in our time, sought emancipation for the whole of society. About education, it has been suggested that the public school should be eased out, only neighbourhood schools should be there, but some other schools should be allowed to maintain standards. Now, I want to stress that education should be the same for all otherwise it will never be equal, it will lead to the same divisions which must be strongly opposed. I hope both the suggestions will be incorporated in the Agenda.

**Romesh Dikshit:** I work in a college in Muzzaffarnagar. I want to refer to Kuldip Nayar's statement on reservations. No one at the time of independence, and I am sure not even he, would have spoken against reservations. This only started after Harijans came to occupy government posts and began to organise themselves politically and demand their rights. The rest were alarmed that if this process continued, society would break up. This is a dangerous attitude. Does it mean that when we come to a point of asking for our rights, you will start wondering whether we should have any at all. We still seem to be discussing on the level of helping, nurturing. The Brahmans, Thakurs and Vaisyas who once ruled are now in consort with the present ruling groups which I don't approve of. You must realise that we are two nations — the haves and the have-nots. Unless the extreme inequality is removed, reservations cannot go.

Then, again, I feel Ms. Thapar should not worry what will happen when English goes. Our languages, Kannad, Malayalam, will manage to cope very well. No one talks about simplifying English, only about simplifying Hindi. This attitude about language is similar to the attitude about the Harijans — the two meet in wanting to paper over the present situation: If you want any fundamental change you can't have it by attacking reservations or organised labour, just because labour is organised and the kisans are not,

This is an imperialist attitude, aligned to the upper classes, upper castes. I submit that these are the sections who have a hand in the moves against the cultural, social, language, economic aspirations of the people of Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland who want equality with the rest of India. This is the core of the problem. And if you see it any other way, nothing will come out of this conference.

**G B K Hooja:** I belong to the Lok Sevak Sangh and am a V.C. in exile. I do not consider people brahmmins by virtue of their caste. You are all brahmmins here. Your 'karma' makes your brahmmins. Even John Sahib (V.V. John) is a Brahmin. We are talking about 'education' here. Whatever is happening in universities is not education. I'm definitely of the view that this is 'anti-education'. We are all deluding ourselves—we are all hypocrites. Secondly, education is not democratic but 'anti-democratic'. No child who has passed through this 'educational' process can ever appreciate the values of democracy.

I want to say something on two more things, corruption and defection. I'm the consumer of the end product of this system and have also participated in the production process by being an administrator and Vice-Chancellor. I'm therefore saying it with first hand experience that defection and corruption are the logical outcome of this educational system where no moral education is ever imparted to the students although some may pick up morality and education outside the classroom — in their families and social milieu.

Now my suggestion, which I have discussed with several people is that one day a month should be kept in school for cleanliness — with broom in hand they all should participate. Gandhiji gave us the instrument, the symbol of the Charkha. I think we should adopt the symbol of the broom. This will minimise untouchability and class. But the brahmin in you is not ready for this, is not ready for untouchability. This is an elite society, a traditional society. Unless we get out of this, all talk of democracy is a fraud. I'm very well acquainted with different commission reports, on educational reforms — Radhakrishnan Commission, Kothari Commission, and thirty years back, the Mudaliar Commission — but things have not changed at all. Your suggestion to delink jobs and degrees is a commendable one. I agree with this and the suggestion must be sent to UPSC for consideration. Regarding 'promotion' and 'reservation', I want to extend my qualified support to your proposals. I approve reservation in the lower ranks but not in technical jobs. I also suggest that education in one craft be made compulsory, from 9th to 12th standard. But the talk of 'siphon off' to which John Sahib has just referred is totally anti-democratic. Basic changes must be brought about in education. It should be made cooperative rather than competitive. There must not be an acquisitive instinct but a creative one in education.

**Vir Bhatia:** I work in the Planning Commission. In the context of restoring dignity to and raising



the status of the vulnerable sections of the society, including Harijans, women, minorities, landless labourers etc., we have talked about institutional changes, structural changes even destroying a particular system so that a new system will emerge which will ultimately get us the results which we want. I am not sure whether we have the time for all that. It may well be that this is all necessary, reservations and other steps that have been mentioned will deliver the goods. Perhaps. But do we have the time? To believe that all this will deliver the goods, is to believe in what is popularly known as the trickling down theory. Ultimately, the benefits will trickle down to those who must get them.

It seems to me that there is a positive way whereby we can attack the problem directly, by providing them regular jobs. People can be put to work, planting trees, building houses, improving land, making it cultivable, building tanks and canals and irrigation channels and building roads and all kinds of other construction activities. The country definitely has the resources to start on this job here and now. If we can put people to work on a regular basis and make them feel that they are productive, they are not getting doles, they are creating assets which are used in the society, which are becoming in fact, the very basis for further development, then we shall be able to give them a certain sense of self-confidence and freedom from fear which will, perhaps, go a much longer way in solving this problem than all the talk of institutional changes, revolutions, destroying the society and creating a new one and structural changes and so on.

**Y Satya:** I am from the IIT Delhi. When we say that the poor form 70 to 80 per cent of our people, how can we talk of reservation on a caste basis. Think of the Brahmins as an example. Many of the Brahmins are holding more administrative, army, political and other posts than Harijans. But, traditionally, Brahmins have been living on a sort of 'begging'. They do some 'havans' or 'pooja' in someone's house and someone will donate something. There is no wage in all this. They will not have any property. Most of them in villages are not even literate. Those are the people who are as poor as any of the Harijans. On top of that the social status prohibits Brahmins from doing the kind of jobs which Harijans do. Should they then just be completely ignored or put into invisibility or unseemable caste system? I think it is the human misery which has to be taken into account, Harijans or no Harijans. In fact, to those who believe in God, I think all of us are Harijans.

Secondly, about organising the poor, it is very good. They have to organise and conflict has to come. But, do we want to divide the poor or do we want to transcend the caste system. Taking revenge for what higher-caste people have been doing to women and children is not the right spirit. Then, Brahmins and high-castes have many backward social attitudes, purdah and not doing menial jobs even if they don't have work. They should work. Now, why

should Harijans imitate these aspects of the upper castes which are backward? and let us not forget that there are many hierarchies apart from the caste ones which are equally vicious and have to be dealt with.

**Javed Laik:** Journalist. I find that we have been talking about blueprints for day after tomorrow and we have not been really discussing today at all. This is known as projection—when you don't wish to tackle what is happening today, you discuss day after tomorrow. So, perhaps we should be more practical and see what an urban middle-class, gathering like us can really do, lacking in a sort of guts as middle class gatherings are. I think we should get down to a very practical and one-point programme which is that the struggle at the moment is not of the proletariat or the peasantry but between two types of the middle class and I think the middle class represented here is probably the salt of the earth compared to what is in power. And in that sense if you just compare ourselves with those, we should speak with confidence and decide here and now that we should not cooperate with anything in government since most here are journalists or academics, or economists and people like that. I think we should take a small step, perhaps in non-cooperation by not writing or taking part in TV or radio programmes of the government, by not writing anything which might be taken in support of the government or by not taking part in government-sponsored seminars and things like that. I think that would be a far more practical step than talking about blueprints for day after tomorrow or a revolution 30 years later.

**Dhirendra Sharma:** JNU. I would have preferred to speak in Hindi but, in respect of those who might not be able to understand Hindi, and if Hindi friends would permit, I would like to speak in English. Hindi or the language issue is not important, so long as we can communicate. Then it is an historical fact that due to certain colonial past experience, English has become a medium of communication. I would submit to my friend Romila Thapar that what can AIR do when you cannot find an equivalent common expression which a jhuggiwalla or a rickshawwalla can understand or you and me because we have been westernised too long in Anglo-Saxon jargon. Sometimes I myself can't understand AIR words though I have a good Sanskrit background and feel confused at some new word they have coined and what it stands for. But, people of this country have never quarrelled on the issue of language. You go to the Kumbh Mela where lakhs of people meet, they never quarrel about language. But you go to some political meeting and you see them burning down the railway stations to impose a sign on a black-board. So the point at issue is not language.

Then you have raised many issues and I don't want to be a cynic, but in 1950 when I applied for a passport, a CID man came to ask me a few questions. 'What you think India's future?' So, I said 'In China, they just had a revolution. After Independence Jawaharlalji is leading the country. He said we have



a tryst with destiny and we are marching on' I said in 10 years India will be marching on and we will be ahead of everybody, having solved our problems and everything. And he said, 'what if that doesn't happen' and I said, 'We will have a bloody revolution, what difference does it make?' Either we die poor or we die with pride and respect and self-aggrandisement'. The CID man wrote that I was inclined to the Left and therefore on my passport it was written 'all countries in Europe except USSR'. Now it is 1980, there is no revolution. Economic crisis is just the same. We once had great hope from Left forces. Yesterday, an implied question was raised about which side we were on? I really thought I would be on the side of the oppressed. If they have to rise, then you must decide on which side to be. There is between the lines something not clear in our society. We have been saying that we have a colonial past. Yes, but if we are fighting western colonial influence, then where will you put Karl Marx? Where does he fit in? Is it a western solution of the problem or not. Then also is it really necessary that we must all the time refer to J.P., Gandhiji, Jawaharlalji, Mao Tse-tung, Marx or Karl Marx? Why has it become so important that in our culture we always want a Big Brother up there to take our hand and then we say we are trying not to have authoritarianism but distributive justice. Deep rooted in our cultural ethos is the elder brother, father, somebody older to look for guidance. So I do feel the time has come to dissent, to disagree within our families.

How many universities and even political institutions are closed down today and we talk of so many other things but in the document we have not touched those issues which would have burnt our fingers. Why have we not asked for a cleansing of our political system? The Janata Party, in its manifesto said that every member of the Cabinet in the Parliament would disclose his assets. But only Madhu Dandawate did so. Then, I would say that a parallel black money economy is running the country but was that in the economic session? In Calcutta I learnt that even the communist parties are receiving support from other sources. Do you have the courage to say that this economic system is not the answer for our national problems? Good resolutions we have heard for 30 years but the economic issue must be taken seriously. Are we saying this economic system continues or shall we work to break this system. On the cultural and social side I feel we have not done our home-work. For example, in which country in 1980, perhaps it happens everywhere, will 4 million people gather for a Kumbh Mela and government machinery will see that everybody participates comfortably in that programme. What are our priorities? Then, again, why has no religious head, no Shankaracharya condemned violence on Harijans.

**Raj Krishna** I would like strongly to suggest that Ram Chhabra's suggestions should be taken seriously and we should incorporate them in the revised document. There is no use pretending that we are not discussing this document. This is the basis on which we have been invited and it is a shame that the pas-

sage on women is not there. Since I am now a certified feminist, I must plead for this. Ram Chhabra certified it publicly.

Second, so far reservation has only applied to seats in higher education and government jobs. But when I was talking about reservation as a principle, it was in relation to other amenities which the State presumes to deliver, namely, credit for the landless, seats in training institutions other than higher education, even access to social services provided by the government and so on. If you extend the principle like that, it is no longer only the aristocracy which would be covered. If you put the craftsmen in the general queue of getting anything, they don't get anything. It is only on the basis of the principle of reservation that you can get them, to get a share of the minimum of whatever people are getting. The criticism of reservation is misplaced because the system has been defective, not the principle. And in the long run one would certainly wish for an economic criteria like in the guarantee scheme etc. But until economic categories dominate other deliveries, I think deliveries on the basis of social handicraft categories will be inevitable.

My third point is to extend what John Sahib said about education. I think if we want to do this delinking, we have to appoint government commissions to re-define the qualifications for government jobs and corporate-sector jobs, in which no degrees are required — national examinations open to anybody, specifically requiring knowledge relevant to those jobs, and no degrees for admission to these examinations. Without this de-linking does not become operational.

John Sahib's point of the pricing of higher education, can be carried forward only in one way. I think everyone agrees that in large parts of India the educational system is dead and only needs to be buried, particularly in the Hindi zone. In this situation, I would plead for what I would like to call piece-rate education. This whole exercise in which you pay professors every month a fixed salary for not teaching, where most of the people don't teach, they minimise their own knowledge and minimise the knowledge of others, is a farce. I would, therefore, suggest that after school or 14 years or whatever you want to fix, we should have a piece-rate system — i.e., Raj Krishna offers five lectures on planning, five rupees per lecture, two-and-a-half rupees for the half two-and-a-half rupees for Raj Krishna. And there is no examination, there is no certificate, there is no attendance, there is no compulsion. If I give something useful to them, they will come, if I am a bad dancer, nobody would come. And there is no compulsion of any kind. I think this can work. Then whoever gets this lecture on a piece-rate basis from whosoever, can take this certified examination, and the whole hoax of compulsorily paid professors, compulsorily admitted students, daily strikes by karamcharis, by principals, by teachers, by professors, by students — this whole hocus pocus would end. We will just have necessary education up to the secondary level and piece-rate education on a



crop sharing basis — 50 per cent — and this will simplify matters. Please take this seriously because you see, my tragedy like Shaw is that my style is humorous, but I want to tell you that I am absolutely serious.

**Jaidev Sethi:** We have heard all about different crises but when you come to the social crisis, you find that we ourselves are part of the creators of the crisis. Here, we are talking about the educational crisis and all of us have contributed to it, and the ball is in our court or in your court. The education system is not a class structure, it is a dual structure in which the class structure can be subsumed. There are two educations — one which starts with the English language, in a private school where you pay 200 rupees. The moment you enter college, you pay 15 rupees, because this is a whole stream, but the private school stream goes to the best colleges, the best universities, ultimately ending up in the United States of America or somewhere else. They have nothing to do with the rest of the education. There is no one education system and still we have been talking about it and I am glad there was a journalist who said that and not by way of a joke.

I am sure Kuldip has not seriously read the Education Commission's report. It is the worst document ever produced in this country. It has been the source of great trouble. Now, we have two education systems? Has anybody looked into the Radhakrishnan report? Please look at the first page. There are 10 members of the commission, out of which four are members of the colonial empire of the British, the American, the French and the Canadian. We were at that time thinking of an Indian system of education. Then, you take the education commission of 1956 — there are three people sitting over that. Then, for the first time we thought that education was to be related to manpower planning, and manpower planning for the Education Commission was done in the London School of Economics! This is internal colonialism, and represents the English language-educated class which says we can communicate with one another, which says we are keeping the country united while actually dividing it. In five, six senses there are two Indias, and educationally, I think, this is the most divisive sect of our society. Is equality of opportunity really going to give an access to education — to everybody? The answer is that equality of opportunity basically creates inequality. It is a differential treatment of education that is required, not equality of opportunity. These are all borrowed from the welfare State concept where societies have developed, employment is guaranteed and there is social equality. I think Romila talked about autonomy of the university. But, today, our campuses are nearest to the power structure, corrupting them completely. There is no such thing as autonomy of the university. Universities are instruments for political education as much as of any other education. Either you give the right education, or the wrong people will take over. One more point about adult education. It was very rightly said by V V John that adult education was not merely a literacy programme. It was meant to be a programme for creating awareness among the people. But the last

Minister, Karan Singh, the day he joined the Ministry of Charan Singh, said 'I want to scuttle this adult education'. Two members of Parliament, publicly radical, whose letters are lying in the file, said 'please close this system because this is one dangerous programme because it will make people aware of their rights and their other problems, and once they become aware of it, then the country will go aflame.' I don't think this country can become one, either in the class sense or in the institutional sense or in the cultural sense unless we adopt, once and for all, a common Indian language. I would like to remind you about one thing. Gandhiji was not a fool. He spent 40 years of his life trying to sell simple Hindustani to the rest of India, and he convinced most of South India about the necessity of having a common language. If we can communicate, do you think 3 per cent of the people and the 97 per cent of the people are two peoples? If this country really wants to have a common language, I would like those great Marxists, great radicals to look at the first sentence of the Chinese educational policy in its 1949 programme. Let them look at the Soviet Union. This is the only country which is prepared to tolerate an internal colonialism, internal academic colonialism because we discuss a few things in this language and think that we can communicate among ourselves.

Take the Indian medical establishment. It costs the Government of India to train a doctor anywhere, for Rs 100,000. May be in a small college, Rs 75,000. Now I don't expect these doctors to go to the rural areas for the simple reason of the kind of super-specialists they are. 12,000, 13,000 doctors are produced every year, 3,000 MDs. So, please let's have a short-course doctor who will be from the rural areas, who will know the communicable diseases.

The point I am making is that the way we define our poverty line, the way we locate health care in this country is going to lead to biological decay. In 25 years time, one quarter of our children would be born morons. The poverty line means that 40 to 50 per cent of our population do not get simple adequate calories, that means adequate food. Don't think of education, don't think of other things. One attack of diarrhoea or any other disease and they just break down for the rest of their lives. And we are talking about our great constitution and universal primary education! This is the biggest hoax that we have played on the country — primary universal education. It is just not feasible for these people to send their kids there.

One more point about health. Thirty years of planning be shamed and damned if this country cannot provide safe drinking water supply to 200,000 villages. Half the problem of population would be solved if you could. I would request you to go to one such village and see the life there. It is not creating some kind of hysteria. It is a situation of gross inequality, entrenched poverty, degradation, destitution — women going for five hours in the morning to fetch water, five hours in the evening, then in between they pro-



duce children and this is all their life consists of And this is our health problem

Since this is related to the women's problem, I am an anti-feminist, because I find that urban women's organisations are not interested in the poverty-ridden rural women. But women administrators, District Collectors or Deputy Collectors have delivered these goods much more effectively than men there. They can talk to the women about family planning, their home work, hygiene and everything and, above all, they can't be corrupted, while almost all of our male administrators can.

#### WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

**Romesh Thapar** I will now ask for specific statements on what you think should be done and I want these statements to be very specific — no analysis, no thesis about the future prospects of movements, formation of parties, anything. I want specific proposals as to how we proceed to the clarification of our own understanding of the crisis, and how we wish to mobilise the people and to activate their participation in the formulation and resolution of this drama. So, I will ask, to begin with, Narayan Desai because he has to catch the train, and that I hope will make him speak very fast and very short.

**Narayan Desai.** A few suggestions. We will have to fight both untruth and the creation of terror, the dual instruments of dictatorship. Then this must be carried to the masses with whom we must keep close contact to understand their problems. We must also refrain from being dictatorial in our every-day activities.

**Raj Mohan Gandhi:** A national forum may well be worth considering provided, in my view, we can agree on two things. The first is on some norms for those who want to belong to it. I would like to propose the setting up of a committee to go into this specific question — what norms do we propose for those who want to be part of this national forum. What should be the code we accept for our life, for our work, for our battle? Also, we must think of precise action on the points we have discussed. I would like to suggest that we drop the word 'intellectual' because if we are to give any kind of hope to the country, we must go to the country as concerned citizens and invite other concerned citizens, otherwise we are going to restrict our activity altogether. Yes, intelligentsia. And the last point that I would make is that we should really think today itself of Hindi names for our groups.

**Pradip Bose:** Journalist. There is some confusion specially with our younger friends about discussions, meetings and seminars. I agree with Lenin when he said that a revolutionary theory must precede revolutionary action. And in this, I think, the intellectuals have a very crucial role to play. We are indebted to the Steering Committee members that they were able to produce a document for discussion. Now, I think there are four or five tasks that we could evolve. First

is that we will have to involve the intellectual community throughout the country as much as possible in this kind of discussion in order to be able to evolve a programme which is realistic, workable. There should be some very specific priorities. An extended draft will provide a framework which is not a final thing but will be able to indicate in which direction the country could go forward. But then in order to be able to translate some of these ideas into reality, my suggestion is that this document should be sent to the leaders of the political parties which are likely to respond. That is at the highest level, at the national level. This could be, at a later stage, taken over at the State level. Now, apart from that, you have the MPs, MLAs, other members of elected bodies who are starved of ideas and information. Then, economic organisations like trade unions, cooperatives and others, even employers' organisations, the youth and students organisations should certainly be approached. And, finally — many of us might belong to political parties, we might be independent, or have no political affiliations, but eventually the document is a political document and its success will be measured in terms of the ability to offer a political alternative. It is a political programme and we cannot get away from it. So far as the details are concerned, I think it will entirely depend on the individuals who come and take the responsibility.

**P. G. Mavalankar.** Now, my suggestion is that instead of calling it national forum, I like the word national dialogue. If you want Hindi, then 'Rashtriya Samvad'. Then every person indicating his proposal in writing, I would like to say, should also give his address and interests so that the local chapters know each other and can communicate. As regards position papers, it might be a good idea to have a bulletin, preferably every two months, six copies a year, which can be a channel of communication and information between members of different chapters within the country. And, lastly, I hope the discussions and our own membership of these forums or whatever you may call them, chapters or dialogues, may not give us a stamp of permanent non-conformists or fashionable non-conformists. We must create a climate where we support governments or establishments when they do the right thing and not feel compelled to criticise everything under the sun.

**Romesh Thapar:** I just want one clarification as we proceed. We don't want to go into things like membership and all that because it is really much better that each one of you sees himself as someone who organises a group, and you can keep us informed. As more coherence develops round our concepts and ideas, we can think of firmer organisational forms, otherwise you get into the whole 'tamasha' that all our political organisations are in. So, avoid membership for the moment, but think of what else can be done.

**Vasant Bawa.** I am from the Gokhale Institute in Pune. I agree with the remarks made by Rajmohan Gandhi and Pradip Bose and Mavalankar and I will suggest one or two new points. One is that already





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there are a number of organisations in the fields of public affairs and education. For example, Hindustani Andolan, Bombay, Citizens for Democracy and then there is an organisation newly set up which is trying to do something regarding a code of conduct for professionals — i.e., the Peoples' Trust in Bombay, not yet very active. I was wondering whether we could have some kind of liaison with these existing organisations. Secondly, there are a number of regional and city organisations in every major city and I think it is not fair to confine this to university towns as is proposed in one of the notes, nor to confine it to State capitals as is proposed in one of the other notes, or one of the speakers. I think wherever people are available of the right type, such an organisation should be set up and, notwithstanding what the Chairman said, some kind of a link with the Centre is required and I would say some sort of formal link also.

**Nihal Singh.** I must confess I was a bit disappointed at both the proposals. We have to give them teeth. To begin with, I would suggest that each State should have one person in charge of calling conferences such as we have had, thereby utilising the interest created in the country by such a gathering. And to give women their due, let's have 50 per cent of these convenors in the States, women. Then let us have a special time frame, the so-called time-bound programme which I would prefer to call time-barred. Let us have another conference in six months time in Delhi after all the States have had their own conferences and let us go on from there a stage further. I think we have seen during the past two days that there has been great interest among the participants on several problems and over the country's major problems as well. We should have a very definite programme in terms of what we want to do because one of the central themes that has emerged out of these two days is the discouraging feeling, almost defeatist in mood, that things are getting so much worse and therefore we have had it. Why should we accept the fact that in another year we won't be able to meet like this? Why should we do that? I think that is the one weapon which the present regime as any regime similarly inclined uses to great advantage. Secondly, I would say that Rajmohan Gandhi's suggestion about code of conduct or norm is a very good one. But let us not impose norms here.

**Nirmal Bose:** First, in spite of the fact that there are signs of depression, when we go out of this hall at 6 P.M. this afternoon, we should go with a note of optimism that there is a future for the country, a future for democracy and there is no scope for defeatism. Secondly, the draft Agenda for India will be rewritten and translated into different languages. It has also been suggested that in all the States there should be conferences. But apart from organising meetings, we should start a signature campaign for the document, in order to know how many people are for the ideas we stand by. And, finally, I would endorse Nihal Singh's suggestion that we meet after six months. But when we meet in future, I would suggest that we should have subjectwise conferences as well.

Then and then only shall we be able to have in depth studies of the problems.

**L. C. Jain:** I have a few thoughts for activists and those who may not like to be so active. I think there is room for both. For activists No. 1. You may have heard of what Ela Bhatt has done in Ahmedabad. She has organised 8 to 10 thousand self-employed people. You could learn to organise from her experiences. The second suggestion is that we have had too much of the instrument of 'Gherao' and instead we should attempt 'Phelao': 'Gherao' has an element of coercion, but if you can talk to people on the street explaining your point of view, a public education, then even if you have Section 144 where not more than five people can gather, 'phelao' can be an instrument which can be practised. Try it out. Next is that I am launching this movement called the 'Ek Ratti Adhikar Movement' which is the minimum rights movement. I think the people want some change in relationship with the administration and the police, for which there are no ground rules for the village. Now, we have no charter for the 'Ek Ratti' movement. But, if you talk to a group of citizens about how the administration and the police infringe on their lives, I think, something can emerge. There are lakhs of people who are doing their petty little trades, but if you really look at their lives the harassment of forms and licenses, how they are impinged upon by authority without any protection, then one can draw up some kind of charter. Some kind of self-regulation by their association which has a right, and if the association can't control their members, then the police and the law can come in. Also, police power is at its worst in social legislation like the Immoral Traffic Suppression Act, the Adulteration Act, the Child Labour Act. This is where some kind of social forum is needed. Next, it is for those who want to do something at the level of thinking or writing or analysis without action, the example of the Consumer Education Research Centre in Ahmedabad will be extremely useful. They made a study of what is called the public distribution system, the poor and its buying habits the rules and regulations of the shop, and they found they had been so designed that the poor simply cannot get anything out of that. If you can take up simple problems like these it will have a great impact. In terms of the communication of ideas in the rural areas, what is the most inexpensive way, from my experience, is to use the district court where people gather from all over. Even a small handbill can communicate ideas within 48 hours. The tea shop is another.

**Vinod Seth:** I write poetry from Delhi. There is one organisational point—we can develop this forum on a pin-code basis. We already know there are 8 pin-code sections in India—one, two, apply to Northern India, three, four, Rajasthan and West India, five, six, to South India and Karnataka and seven, eight, to East India, Assam and others. So we can confine our movement to four regional centres. About the name, I thought it better to call it the national volunteers forum and with an overseas



section called overseas volunteers forum Some speakers have said that the function of this forum must be political I am afraid of that because often para-political activity is conducted through such forums initially meant for the enhancement of the national character, of public organisation as such Therefore I suggest that somewhere in the forum itself should be stated that it is anti-political rather than non-political or political

**K R K Gandhi:** I am from Kanpur I think a parallel method of disseminating information should be attempted, discussions should be organised, wherever possible, but about the organisational set-up, I don't have many suggestions. The set-up should be such that we can organise and generate more discussions not necessarily under one forum. There can be many forums

**Dinesh Mohan:** I am on the faculty at the IIT In the short-term perspective, the only people who can implement the Agenda are people like Zail Singh, Sanjay Gandhi and so on So, in the short term, we have to decide on how we are going to resist and organise against fascism. And it is only in the long term if and when we can implement some of the ideas we are thinking about that we have to consider the particular institutions and mechanisms which are wrong and how they can be improved and replaced with better mechanisms

**Digvijay Kumar Singh:** a student of Jawaharlal Nehru University. Two days deliberations have made it clear that we are ready to fight 'authoritarian forces'. But, unfortunately, 'authoritarian forces' have not been spelled out It must be recognised that Mrs. Indira Gandhi represents the authoritarian trend in our politics I suggest that the same be added to the Agenda.

For a short term programme I suggest one political action — to oppose individually or collectively all the trends of authoritarianism. We can take up the issue of Assam for instance — the way the central government is tackling the problem clearly exposes its authoritarian character For long term perspectives I suggest the issues to be taken up — 'Price Rise' and 'Unemployment'

**Romesh Dikshit:** The structure of the organisation has been clearly detailed in both the drafts It takes time to form an organisation I therefore suggest an immediate action — we can organise a protest rally after these deliberations to protest against the dissolution of State assemblies If you are afraid to do that, we can at least issue a statement to this effect When the fascist character of the rulers has clearly emerged, the humble way of 'petitioning' will not serve our purpose We must assert ourselves against the fascism of Indira and Sanjay Gandhi through civil disobedience and other non-violent means of protest.

**Nayantara Sehgal:** I am a writer. I agree with those who have said that while they are concerned with the day after tomorrow, they are also much

concerned with the immediate situation. I would like to endorse Raj Krishna's statement that we must develop a collective approach and generate collective strength because in any situation of terror, I think, isolation is one of the greatest anxieties, whether it is the raped woman or the assaulted Harijan or any one of us who may in other, lesser ways be subjected to harassment and pressure Wherever there is injustice and regardless of political and other considerations, of whether we subscribe to socialism or communism or Congressism or Hinduism or whatever, we must be vocal and vigorous. We have to get out of the area of theory and debate and into action

**Romesh Thapar:** I would like to make one clarification There are hundreds of organisations in the country which are action organisations Each one of us should belong and do belong to such organisations Well, all I say is, activate them If we called you to a meeting to clarify our minds about the theory of the crisis around us, it does not mean that the only thing left for us to do is to start marching from this hall I am very sorry, I must explode, but we have no group which is coordinating thinking throughout this country I really want you to understand that Even in the debate that has taken place over the last two days, there is no unified understanding We are uncertain about so many issues We have talked of two Indias, we cannot agree on language even and I am told we should act Now, I want to be very frank and honest with you This group is not an action group It is a group that will clear our minds about the threats that surround us So, take your 'lathis' under another organisation because this is not that organisation Let's first get clear about what the problem is, because we are not launching a movement I don't know where we would end up if we tried to have an organised movement — each one of you has his own views If you want to activate yourself, then do so and take whatever punishment is due under the circumstances Perhaps ultimately there will be a mainstream which will challenge the authoritarian forces But to imagine that this two-day meeting can now launch a nationwide movement, is naive All that we can do is co-ordinate and assist the process but this is not the place for those who are more impatient I wish them luck We are perhaps behind the times but I don't see the visuals all over India that show this clarity. I am sorry to break through the role of the chairman, but I must try to bring this discussion into focus on what we are to do with this kind of thinking that we have been doing How are we to activate this thinking throughout the country We will not disperse, as you will find out in the coming months

**Ram Chander Gandhi** I teach philosophy I suggest the starting of a weekly, a people's or citizens' newspaper at once It could be called 'Samvad', 'Sujhav', or 'Sangharsh' In fact, I suggest it be called all three. And I suggest that all our best writers and journalists take a vow to contribute at least one communication every month to a panel that would decide what could appear That's one



kind of norm, I think, we could all accept without insisting that our communications be accepted for publication. I think 10 per cent of our salaries ought to go into a fund to sustain this experiment. Then, I offer straightaway to do that. Dialogue, suggestion, struggle — what should we do? — We should bring out issues on 'Assam', 'Woman' and 'Harijan'. We should initiate dialogue, make suggestions, and act. We must also demand radio and TV time for these issues. We can also use newspapers for the purpose and create a fund to which everyone should contribute 10 per cent of their salary.

**Narendra Mehrotra:** I think all this is futile if we do not work for an organisation and organise the poor and the deprived in our respective professional and other fields. We must not forget two things which Gandhi said: (i) we must be clear about ourselves and (ii) we must ask ourselves what we are doing for the common man. Anyone who does not do this, has no right to speak here. Unless we have a base at the grass roots level, we cannot challenge the enemy and cannot struggle for change.

**G B K. Hooja:** I've gone through both the programmes and am thoroughly disappointed. No action programme is suggested. Perhaps, the only action is to hold seminars like this. All this has been an exercise in futility — this has been my personal experience. I therefore suggest a few things for concrete action. We can form four functional groups to deal with different subjects, say, political, economic, educational, etc. The groups should sort out the issues and decide about the action-design. We can take up the 'anti-defection' issue and plunge into action — mere seminar rhetoric will not serve the purpose. Community development, decentralisation, land reforms, education can be other issues which can be taken up for action-design.

**Balraj Mehta:** I was wondering after all these theses why Romesh Thapar didn't explode earlier. Finally, he did and I appreciate it. In spite of the fact that he had earlier himself withdrawn the proposal of this membership business and wisely, that fact didn't seem to have registered on many people. What kind of qualification has such a gathering to talk about marching, about satyagraha, about running this. Are you trying to create a new political party or organisation, or what? We have met here, people with different political understandings, academic disciplines, ideological positions, we have talked among ourselves and tried to understand each other not necessarily reaching even agreement on most issues. If you ask even about the Agenda for India, para after para, I would not be ready to sign it. So, let's see the limitations of this kind of a meeting as well as its usefulness. It is a very useful meeting, I agree. But I think the organisers have invited this kind of comment and follow-up action by the very thought of follow-up action that they have presented. You can at best have some kind of very loose association for further discussion, trying to reach a kind of consensus on some matter, but not building up an organisation around it. People have initiated a

discussion here. Other well-meaning people elsewhere can hold discussions and if something emerges, one can look forward to it but not project an organisation right at this stage. Similarly, I think it is very wrong to make this organisation and those who have participated associate themselves with the commercial venture of a book. To contribute chapters to the proposed book should not become part of any follow-up action of this discussion. That is an independent thing, and might prove to be very useful. But I for one should not be dragged into an association with a commercial venture of that kind. Those people interested on a business basis can certainly go ahead with it. I thought we should get down to a real understanding of the kind of thing that we have done and start off a process of discussion in which all kinds of people can take part in some way at one time or another with all their differences, without signature campaigns or that kind of subscription. I must say this because the whole discussion was getting totally derailed into this kind of follow-up.

**Romesh Thapar:** Thank you, Balraj, for saying this. In fact, talking about marches I don't think I could march our six gentlemen anywhere, on any unified slogan. So, we want to spread the discussion, we want to gain enlightenment from this collusion of minds and not get you involved in anything. We are taking notes of all the suggestions. We are not going to bring out a book; we may bring out another report which will look and read very differently from the one you have in your hands. We will send it out to all of you again and perhaps we may get more signatures on it and then, as someone has suggested, we hold another meeting in six months. And then we have another discussion at a higher level and distribute our ideas to all the politicians who are making a mess of this country. I am not one of those who believe that they are incapable of understanding. Something will stick and thereby help the process of bringing this country into focus. So, I don't want you to feel that I am anti-action. To all those who tell me to start a march, apart from the fact that I probably would collapse after 10 minutes, the point is that I just don't see it.

**Jaidev Sethi:** The first point and the last point. Yesterday, I said I was facing a crisis — that is the crisis of action. Romesh is right, if he and I were to march together we would collapse after 10 minutes but there is a serious problem about action, more action or less action. Now, what happened to me during the Emergency? I went back to Gandhi to find out what he meant by action and I think he gave some criteria. One thing, to Gandhi there was no action which was outside political action. So, somewhere we have to find where our political niche lies, with 108 political parties, it looks like a very confused situation. But I come back to a serious kind of action-oriented situation which Gandhi suggested for a long period — that you have to organise yourself collectively in one form or another. So, the three main things were that if you want to transform a system, the first thing is that you must cooperate with the government where you think the laws are right. Now, I am sure



everybody will get upset about it. He says that if there is a law legislated by a government in the interest of the people, whether it is land reform, public distribution system or anything, you must cooperate with the government. The second is that if there is a law which you think is wrong, it should be resisted. You cannot resist a wrong law unless you cooperate with the right law. And if there is an anti-people law, then you must rebel even at the cost of your life. But this, he said, has to be within a political framework. We do not have a political framework but, maybe, we can look forward to one. I think a time has come in India when both the totally nihilistic and negative attitudes on the one hand and a cooperative collaborationist view on the other, have to be rejected. If fascism is upon us, we have to rebel. But if there are 20 laws which the government is passing in favour of the poor, it is our duty to see that they are implemented, even if we have to do so through our action programmes. This is where the organisation comes in. It is not a question of starting a political party. It doesn't matter if some one goes to a Communist Party, the other to the Socialist Party or to the Congress Party, so long as we follow the three criteria and then come back after three, six or nine months and see where we have acted in assisting what we find is right and resisting what we find is wrong. Maybe, young people are in a better position to make sacrifices but people like us who are on the way out should be in a much better position to make them, even minor sacrifices like giving 5 or 10 per cent of our salary, for something should be given somewhere. Some symbol of our action. Gandhi said, for him it was labour. If you work one hour, two hours for somebody somewhere below you, you would have acted constructively. But again, at no time did he say that it should be outside the political framework. Most of the Gandhian institutes and the Sarva Sewa Sangh and others have degenerated because they left politics. Gandhi said politics was the essence of his life and action was the essence of his life and the two went together.

**Kishore Saint:** I came to this gathering yesterday, perhaps foolishly, with a sense of hope — that this search for a collective, a common understanding of the situation would lead us somewhere, and there were points in these two days' discussion when I thought we were coming near to the crux of it. But to hear from you at this juncture that you are as confused as ever, makes me unhappy. I cannot believe that after going through two days of listening, you could not have perceived some incisive points in terms of what we need to become and the directions we need to move towards. (*Chairman* — no, I have learnt a great deal from this meeting) I hope so. Now, my point is that two forces have been highlighted which can help us to move forward (1) the force of the intellectual; that it has a role to play, it has a job to perform in the present situation and responding to the immediate situation as well as in the long term, and (2) very pointedly, again and again the plight of the poor has been highlighted, not the power of the poor. I think that is where a conjunction is needed. I don't know why we are failing to grasp this. For God sake, let us at least

recognise ourselves, our capabilities, this committee's capabilities, some of the inputs which Rajni Kothari had to put in terms of the alternative outside the stated framework that we can take the initiatives in terms of decentralisation. Let's grasp these things.

Concretely: First please scrap this Agenda and prepare a new agenda which does not look to State power as the main instrument of change here. Anyone reading this Agenda between the lines can see it was drafted before the election with half an eye on the powers that would emerge and this would serve as the basis of a manifesto for them. That's gone. I hope we are sufficiently disenchanted with State power. I am not saying we have to ignore it. We will cooperate, we will follow the laws. It has its role to perform but we shall be thinking and acting independently of it. That's one. The second thing is this dialogue must link with the poor through groups of young activists who are working in the field. Now, this can be immediately done. One has to link with them, dialogue with them, hear what they are saying, feel what they are feeling and let us not apologise. There is need for a movement, need for an alternative. Let us give it.

**Purushotaman:** I feel like a tail ender in a two days' cricket festival. I open a big development shop in the tribal area of Madhya Pradesh which promises 10,000 people employment and it's a beginning. We are going to launch a training programme for 2,000 people at the end of this month. I suggest we identify or create a model in the field of education, health and economic development but not as a book, not as a debate, but within the community. If the society accepts that, we can think in terms of any action or get-together. Otherwise, this kind of agenda can be useful in the university reference hall, the University of Harvard, or Toronto, Berkeley something like that, not in India.

**Urmila Phadnis:** I have some suggestions, a focal point of which is — communication, collaboration and coordination of social activists and others at various levels. On this there is no difference of opinion. But, any sort of organised effort at this juncture will be self-defeating. It seems to me that one has to have a convenor and, for the time being, the steering committee could do the coordination required. Now, if some sort of bulletin could provide information at the social level, the grass-root level in terms of the type of small organisations which are working all over the country, then some of us might be equipped to suggest what to do. And, finally, the idea of another conference, a sort of stock-taking after six months, eight months whatever you have, could be in Delhi but somehow I don't know whether that would be feasible. I find even the atmosphere of India International Centre hall very unreal, far from reality. We all feel it. It's okay, but for the next stock-taking, is it possible to go where work is on and discuss things with social activists doing something in their small way. These things are more important, or as important as the deliberations of this conference. Let's see how many convenors we



find, stock-taking later on, meanwhile, an information bulletin so that we know each other beyond this group

**Bhagwan Dass:** We have been talking about the oppressed sections of our society — the worker, agricultural labourer, untouchables, women I suggest that under the auspices of this steering committee, a small group of people should be involved with the study and practical work for the emancipation of women, agricultural labour and also the problem of labour in general, and one person seriously interested in constitutional study That could strengthen the steering committee's activities Also, one person who should study the problem of communal riots because communal riots led to the creation of Pakistan and I think if atrocities on untouchables are not stopped, they will also raise a voice for a separate country

**Purnima Rao:** A few of us have been planning to form a feature service, a communication service that would hopefully serve the needs that we are all talking about and report on several movements and activities that are taking place at different parts of the country, report about them to the national media and, more important, to the media at the district level — regional level papers and periodicals We are forming this network and would like most of you to use it, both to write in and read and support

**Vijay Pratap:** Being the last speaker I would try to sum up what has been said so far I think we must accept Romesh Thapar's suggestion to make it a forum of 'ideas' (Vichar Manch) and it should be developed along this line And the clarity of ideas that we receive here should be applied in our action fields and respective organisations It would be desirable that we activate our own organisations, deriving strength from the deliberations of this forum, and try to merge our different organisations into one if possible The name suggested by Mavlankar is quite appropriate — Rashtriya Samvad Manch I agree with the suggestions of Nihal Singh regarding organisation and also with the feeling that we'll face the challenge boldly. I want to suggest that there can be more than one convenor — because we have to bring the intellectual and activist closer There is still a wide gap between the two — we'll have therefore to accommodate the representatives of both in the committee of convenors I would like the intellectuals to help the action-groups so that the latter can successfully withstand the onslaught of the existing situation Ram Chandra Gandhi's suggestion of 10 per cent salary contribution should be applicable not only to the national organisation but also to political activities of the action groups The aim should be active liaison between the activist and the intellectual The deliberations of this seminar must come out in a booklet-form.

**Romesh Thapar:** Now just a few statements from the steering committee

**Mrinal Datta-Chaudhuri:** Over these two days, I think, we have attained some clarity of thought

Most people seem to agree that any backward, under-developed society does require organised social action to initiate any transformation. Our problem has been that the concept of organised social action got equated with Statism leading to centralisation of power and certain perversities Here, our kind of group, as cerebral workers, can perform an important role. We could set up a loose organisation in Delhi linked to chapters in various places, which could canalise, process, discuss every individual government action, legislation, etc., and endorse some of these as a good thing and some as a bad thing. This itself will serve a useful purpose Think of the successful strategies that the Left-front government in West Bengal took to implement all the legislation passed by the Congress Government previously. In the process it gave certain signals about the sincerity, the fraudulence of certain political movements. Then, we need to establish a link with the variety of voluntary and professional organisations in different fields Whatever analysis we make of governmental action, we can participate in the good programmes through any such concerned organisation Those we find pernicious, can be opposed. We can then talk about what kind of action programme we might want to take on specific legislation or government action And organisations do exist We don't have to set up a new one, but can collaborate with them and start work from there

**Rajni Kothari:** I think any dichotomy that has come about here between activism and cerebral efforts is most unfortunate. If we can regenerate our thinking process, related not to borrowed models but to the crisis that this society faces in its own framework of thinking and ideas, then we would have moved To me that is the best action that is possible. Don't forget somebody once wrote that Gandhi was out on the streets only four times in his life The rest of the time the old man was sitting at a place and thinking and writing. It is a complete vulgarisation of Gandhi to think that all you have to do is to march There is no action more important than cerebral action at this juncture in our history Therefore, please give up this dichotomy. Basically, the effort mounted here is an intellectual effort Rajmohan Gandhi may be upset about the word intelligentsia, but I am not I am willing to correct it for people like him, but I am not apologetic about it It is important that the intelligentsia understand their roles and don't become a burden on the society which most of them have

This convention is an effort to clarify our ideas, to come up with alternatives, to mobilise opinion around that Secondly, some of us are involved in some action or another but we deliberately called a number of people who are involved in action programmes at various levels And the important thing is to relate ourselves with those action organisations, have a two-way communication and get their feed back More such conventions, smaller conventions, perhaps with these organisations I would say also with political parties We have deliberately kept politicians out of it, but that is not the intention We



first wanted effort among ourselves, the intelligentsia, social workers, journalists and so on

So, let us be clear that we have two or three things to follow up. One is that the document is imperfect and we all agree to put it aside. In fact, we started putting it aside right in the beginning but it needs to be disseminated in various parts. Perhaps, as a document plus comments. Let there be circulation (*Chairman* — change it around from region to region. This is a totally flexible document). Secondly, we should come out with a new document drawing upon the criticism and discussions we have had and upon those who have through their comments endeared themselves to us not because they think similarly but, rather, the other way round and hopefully expand the group to make it more representative of different points of view. Thirdly, you have to follow up the cerebral process itself.

A number of issues have been discussed here in great hurry, and there is need to set up small groups of people who will work on some of these. One is the whole question of decentralisation on which, I think, more than half the time has been given from various points of view, political, territorial, economic, in respect of organising the poor and so on. Then, organisation of the economy, the legal constitutional order, the issue of reservation, the crisis of communication, problem of leadership, population policy, the whole health issue. In each of these somebody will have to take the lead, not the steering committee. For God's sake, just don't leave it to these five, six people. We could help you in setting up the thing and no more. We could help in communicating what is coming out of this. Also, a group on environment is urgently needed. Then there is the question of follow-up meetings at the State level, not necessarily in the capital. Many people have come from Bombay, Hyderabad, Calcutta, Poona and other places but there were those who could not come. We would like meetings to be held at that level. Then, another national convention a year from now. This means in the next six months a series of regional efforts. There is general consensus we don't want two structures but many people felt that let's not just go home. Let there be some continuing organisation. Part of it would be the series of small groups, part of it the regional effort but also some coordination. There is a steering committee and if you send us information, we will put it in a form that is communicated and at some stage we can start a newsletter if there is sufficient enthusiasm. None of us wants to overshoot and then just collapse. This is what happens in most organisational efforts. So, let us say that if there is sufficient response, sufficient momentum, we will follow this.

There is an unraised issue about financing the whole thing. We have deliberately resorted to saying, 'We have no money. Come on your own. You have to pay for your own tea and lunch and so on.' But if this thing has to continue, I just leave it open to any of you to send in contributions. That will be appreciated.

*Summary by George Verghese*

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# Communications for the agenda

**Mulk Raj Anand**  
*Novelist, Editor 'Marg'*

May I say, however, that I share most of the concern which you have written about in the brochure, *Agenda for India*. And I would like to be in touch with you, so that I can participate in the thinking about the minimum manifesto for the basic approach, *de novo*, beyond the previous basic approach of Jawaharlal Nehru in a situation which is quite different and needs reconsideration in view of much that has happened.

Only behind the many rationalisations of the intelligentsia I feel we must remain aware of the wide gulf that separates us from the village people, the workers, the small middle-class and now even the middle class. As an intelligentsia, we have seldom given thought to this disconnection. Consequently, we have participated in an English style parliamentary democracy which can invoke the interest only of five million people or so and will never be a growing democracy.

If this formulation is to any extent true, then the

task before us is to train cadres for development who may spread out into the country and bring participation from the grassroots upwards as happened in the pre-war experiment in Aundh.

I realise this is a formidable task.

But the failure of the emergent lower middle class political leadership through.. their lack of character, self-absorption and power impulses has now become more or less complete or seems to be so. The splits of the Janata Party, the fracture of all ideas into bits and pieces, the montage of little bits of policy as a cover for aggrandisement, has brought the situation in most parts of India to near breakdown of the belief in genuine philosophies of survival.

The drama of the last election with the mobocracy voting from one extreme to the other, shows that democracy and the people's will, much lauded by the intelligentsia during the previous election, is non-existent by and large. The election



is no index to any genuine awareness by people of what they really want

I don't want to seem old-fashioned, but I am all for the belated recognition by Nehru in his last years, that Panchayat democracy and decentralisation must happen at the same time as centralisation.

This cannot be brought about unless the new young build a platform on policies and principles rather than waves of enthusiasm for one idea or another. It needs a complete renovation of consciousness, in fact an Indian style cultural revolution

And first the intelligentsia must cure itself (including myself) of elitist inclinations

Please forgive me for this jumble of words more spontaneous than reasoned out and betraying the angry old man in me, but I am speaking from my anguished heart, as much as out of my hard skull  
*April 3, 1980*

In my broodings on the present situation, I often have sentimental feelings about those days when discussions in the Swaraj Bhavan in Allahabad, among Nehru and his associates, invariably led to action. I remember going with him on mass contact campaigns of 1938. And, later, after the Tirupati Congress there were other excursions.

And I have been asking myself whether it is possible for a few of you friends, to consider going out of Delhi, to other cities and small towns, to discuss with various people the Agenda for India which you have drafted

I have the genuine and sincere desire to see that the orbit of awareness of the problems you have so ably put out in the Agenda for India, need to be pooled in discussion with many many more people, so that we are able to project the intensity of our preoccupations with like-minded, and even hostile, people.

Now that the situation of our country has been extremely challenging, every day we wake up, but specially just now, the challenges are threateningly real!

Most of the politicians have been shown up to be selfish, opportunistic and power crazy. The intelligentsia is mostly supine. The people are bewildered. And those who talk of the democratic vote are fooling themselves because you cannot have such extremes of voting, except in an illiterate and gullible democracy.

*April 24, 1980*

**U.R. Anantha Murthy**

'Please count me as one of the supporters of your movement. In all my writing in Kannada, I have

been advocating quite a few of the ideas contained in your Agenda for India. I will be very happy to associate myself with your activities on my return from Europe in June.

**Ali Ashraf**  
*Jamia Millia Islamia*

May I take the opportunity of this letter to mention that I welcome the idea of a forum of opinion on national issues. My misgiving is however aroused when I read in the Agenda that the democratic political process is facing a serious challenge today and 'This challenge comes primarily from an anti-people and authoritarian political party which thinks of elections, not as an expression of the will of the people, but as an occasion for manipulating public discontent and turning it into a plebiscite for personal power'. I would hold this as well as other political parties and leaders equally responsible for the general malaise.

**Ms Tara Ali Baig**  
*President, International Union for Child Welfare*

With regard to your Agenda for India, there is a vital lacuna in the planning. The Agenda deals with economic reconstruction, decentralisation, population reforms, education, harijans, tribals and minorities, but one of the most significant areas has been totally neglected. No country with the fissiparous elements of caste, class and region such as India can have a basis of nationalism until positive inputs are created in the earliest years of a child's life.

In the 3rd five year plan, government accepted the principle of investment in the child from pre-school upwards and according to a child's needs at each stage of his growth and development. It is imperative that this principle be enforced and activated in ways that can dynamically change our social structure within a generation. Just two simple inputs at the pre-school level, which have been demonstrated brilliantly in China, can be introduced if properly enforced throughout the country. One is concrete steps to teach young children proper hygiene habits and killing of flies, the major source of infant mortality at present. The second is teaching children by deliberate methods to look after each other, with concern for each other.

Properly enforced, these could go a long way to eliminate the clan and caste unconcern for others. These inputs do not cost money, but they must be taken seriously and should be embodied in any agenda for India such as the Steering Committee has proposed.

**M.L. Dantwala**  
*Indian Society of Agricultural Economics*

I do hope the convention makes some impact on the public. I feel that a crisis (for democracy) is not remote and there is a great need for like minded people to get-together, lest we are caught napping.



**Arvind A. Deshpande**  
*Citizens' Coordination Committee for Strengthening Democracy*

You will be happy to learn that as soon as I read this piece in the Seminar Annual, I got over 200 copies duplicated and sent them to various people

Later, on March 1 and 2 we had a study camp in Bombay where we discussed this. Those who attended this camp organised by me on behalf of Citizens' Coordination Committee for Strengthening Democracy included Prof. Varde, the former (Janata) Education Minister, Maharashtra, Mr Raj Mohan Gandhi, Dr Aloo Dastur, Prof Kanetkar, Mr Walavalkar of Jan Sangh and R S S, Dr Usha Mehta, Prof. Kamath, Mr M A Rane, Mr Viren Shah, M P. and Mr. Govindrao Deshpande. It was felt that this is an excellent statement which could almost make a manifesto of Democratic (Opposition) Party although some argued that it should be elaborated further in terms of more concrete programmes to make it acceptable to ordinary citizens. I must also convey to you that everyone at the camp felt *terribly depressed* by the continual crisis and fragmentation in the opposition and felt terribly pessimistic about the possibility of getting even a part of it accepted, particularly the decentralisation of the political set up, by the ruling party. I would request you and others attending the April 5 meeting to try and answer these points

**Zafar Futehally**  
*Environmentalist*

The Agenda is excellently conceived, but I see a serious gap in that there is no reference to the environment as a whole, nor to the importance of renewable natural resources and their prime importance for agricultural and industrial development. I wonder whether this lacunae can be rectified.

**S N. Mishra**  
*Institute of Economic Growth*

I have read the Agenda carefully and I have the following two points to make, one by way of textual change on page 15 and the other by way of an addition to the Section on *Economic Restructuring* (page 6)

(i) The term 'tribals' is indeed offensive to the members of the tribal communities. I therefore suggest that on page 15 and 16 wherever this term occurs, it should be replaced by 'tribal communities' or better still by 'Adivasi communities'

(ii) The section on 'Economic Restructuring' is deficient in the sense that it has nothing to say on restructuring of property. I therefore suggest that the following paragraph be included in this section

'An essential part of economic restructuring is to pursue vigorously de-concentration of ownership in wealth and property including the property in land. This step is not only necessary for solving the problems of poverty, unemployment, regional and income-class disparities, but it is at the same time a pre-condition for a viable, functioning democracy. Besides macro State policies suitable to such restructuring, it requires designing and institution of new communitarian forms of poverty, specially in the rural area, around which the rural poor — the marginal and smaller cultivators and landless labourers — could organise themselves to secure benefits of development'

**C P.M. Namboodiri**  
*Banaras Hindu University*

I have read with much relish the pamphlet entitled 'Agenda for India' which you had kindly enclosed with your letter, and I find myself in total agreement with the programmes and objectives outlined there. As such it would have given me great pleasure to be able to listen to, and perhaps participate in, the deliberations at the proposed convention.

In any case, I would like you to accept this note as an expression of my sense of solidarity with the aims and objectives the organisers of the convention have set before themselves

**Kishen Pattanayak**  
*Samayik Varta, Patna*

The Indian political system has undergone a change qualitatively and this must be taken note of by everyone who is trying to do something politically. We have come to a stage where any government trying to keep stability will have to use authoritarian methods

In the earlier years when most of our political parties were shaped, those believing in the preservation of socio-economic *status quo* were also upholders of democratic and nationalist values, while those who believed in revolution praised dictatorship. The socialist party which initially was committed to revolution, gradually shed off radicalism and accepted the comfortable position of the former category. However, by now the realities have so changed that democratic values and status quoism cannot go together. Our society has either progressed or disintegrated upto such a point that if there is democracy the anti-social elements and the rebel elements are bound to raise their heads and make stability impossible. That is why any government today which is for stability must necessarily use authoritarian methods of arbitrary arrests, ban on strikes and ban on various types of organisation and expression. Thereby it can produce an illusion of stability.

In such circumstances only those who can make use of the rebel elements in the society for



a change in the structure can be viable democrats. The luxury of being a democrat and a status quoist is a thing of the past. The intellectual democrats who directly or indirectly supported the Janata Government of 1977-80 committed the crucial mistake of tolerating a regime which had no inclination to change the socio economic structure. That is how they contributed to the loss of credibility of the camp of democracy. The most difficult thing in the 1980 election was how to communicate democracy to the common man.

The task remains intact. Can we communicate democracy to the common man without associating ourselves with the rebel actions and processes going on in the society? It is these rebel processes which will provide the ultimate weapon with which we can fight authoritarianism which has come to stay on a long lease now.

#### **Sachhidananda**

*A N.S. Institute of Social Studies, Patna*

I am in complete agreement with what you have said in the statement called 'Agenda for India'. I do share the concern expressed therein.

#### **Vasant J. Sheth**

*Businessman*

Broadly, on the mechanics of better grassroot democracy, I strongly feel that all our MLAs and MPs and any other elected persons should compulsorily stay in the areas from where they come and should be helped in formulating plans for regional development by each region having a service co-operative consisting of technocrats like agriculturists, horticulturists, architects, engineers, economists, practical businessmen, etc., who would be made to give free advice and draw up plans as per regional needs, who should then fight for proper allocation in the Parliament or Assemblies.

I am convinced that it is in the politician's own interest to remain popular in the area and the only way in which he can really remain popular is by genuinely servicing his constituency. This would obviate the present attraction of centralised interest in backing a particular leader who is likely to be victorious rather than enjoying the grassroot popularity. Having given him this vested interest, I think we could ensure both continuance of democracy and some meaningful development and proper dialogue in Assemblies and Parliament.

#### **M.N. Srinivas**

*Sociologist*

"Agenda for India" is an important statement and the issues raised in it need to be discussed widely in this country in the interests of our democracy and development.

#### **Vijay Tendulkar**

*Playwrite*

Please don't interpret my absence as my lack of interest in what will be discussed there.

I have keen interest in this convention. I am with you and will be with you in whatever plan of action the participants decide to implement.

#### **Yadunath Thatte**

*Pune Editor, 'Sadhana'*

(i) How to reach the illiterate 70 per cent people in the country? If we do not find a two way communication method with the masses and talk only at them and dwell only on writing in papers, I am afraid that we may fail miserably again. Are we going to think seriously about that in the conference?

(ii) The dichotomy lies in the objective situation in our country. Those who have capacity to understand change have their vested interest in not understanding it and those sections of our society whose vested interest lies in change, we are not able to reach them and explain to them. If we are serious in our analyses of the situation, then are we prepared to bring some desirable change in our pattern of life which will create credibility for the intelligentsia in the society. People in general take efforts like this as an entertainment and conscience clearing programme.

#### **Nirmal Verma**

*Writer*

However, it is not merely a formality that I say that I earnestly wish for the success of the convention. We are living in the most critical times — perhaps more critical than what we lived through during the Emergency. At least, then the Evil had a definite face and we could have pointed out without ambiguity, who it is. Now everybody seems to be confused. I pray that the convention could give some concrete guidelines to action. In fact, the Agenda should now transform itself into an *Action Programme* for all the working people of our country.

#### **V. S. Vyas**

*Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad*

I am in broad agreement with the document 'Agenda for India'. May I make two suggestions, one on style and the other of substance? I wish that the final document on Consensus may be a much shorter document than the Agenda. The Agenda reads more like a manifesto. In the process of elaboration there is a danger of missing the gut issues on which a wider agreement is possible. Second, I think that you have not emphasised adequately the inherent dangers of a bureaucracy-run development programme.



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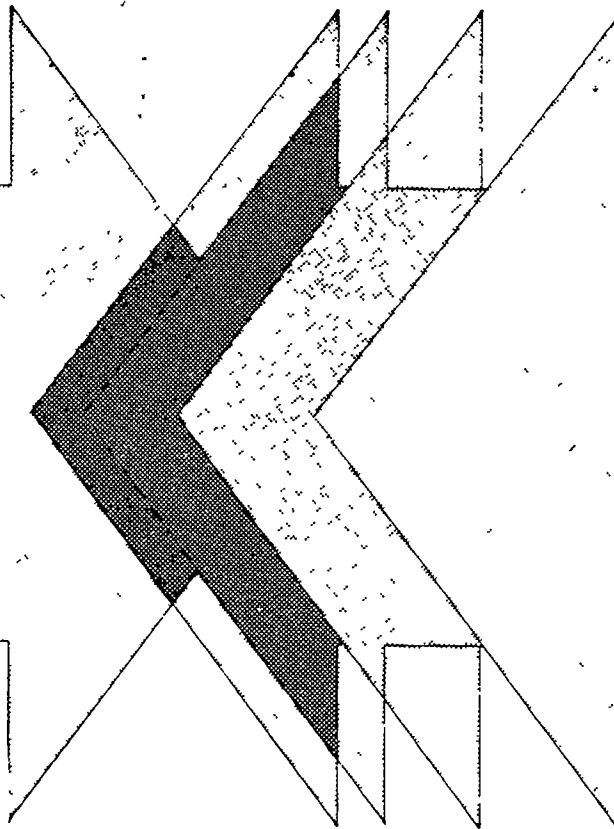
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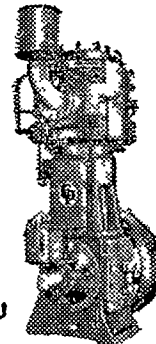
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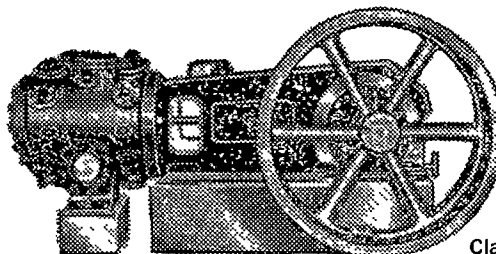
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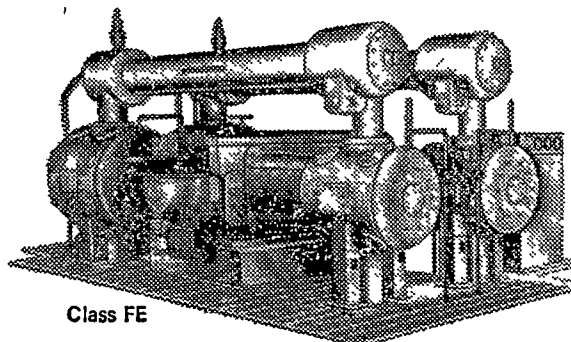
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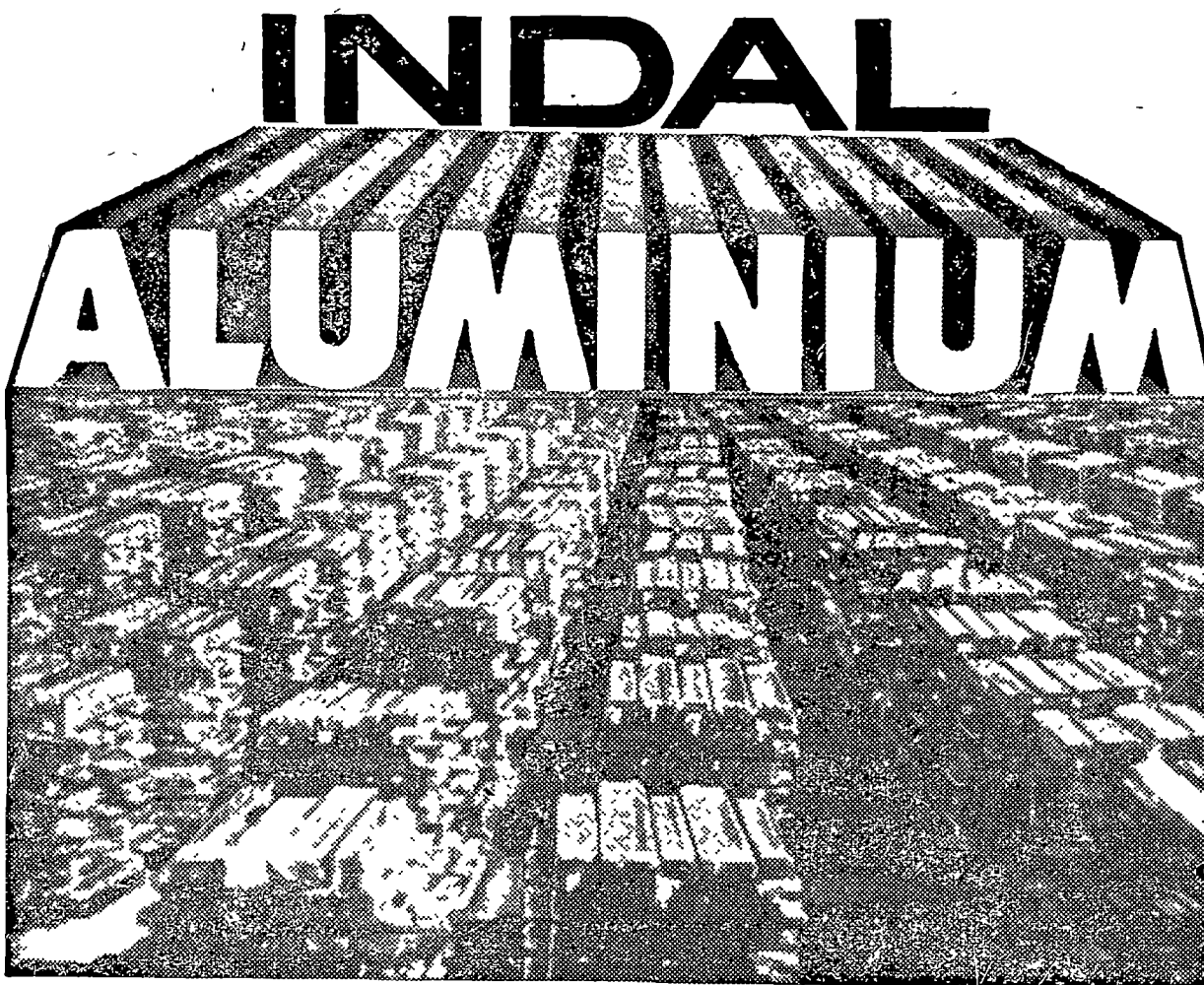
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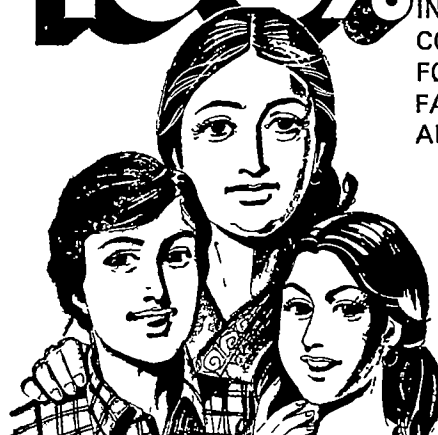
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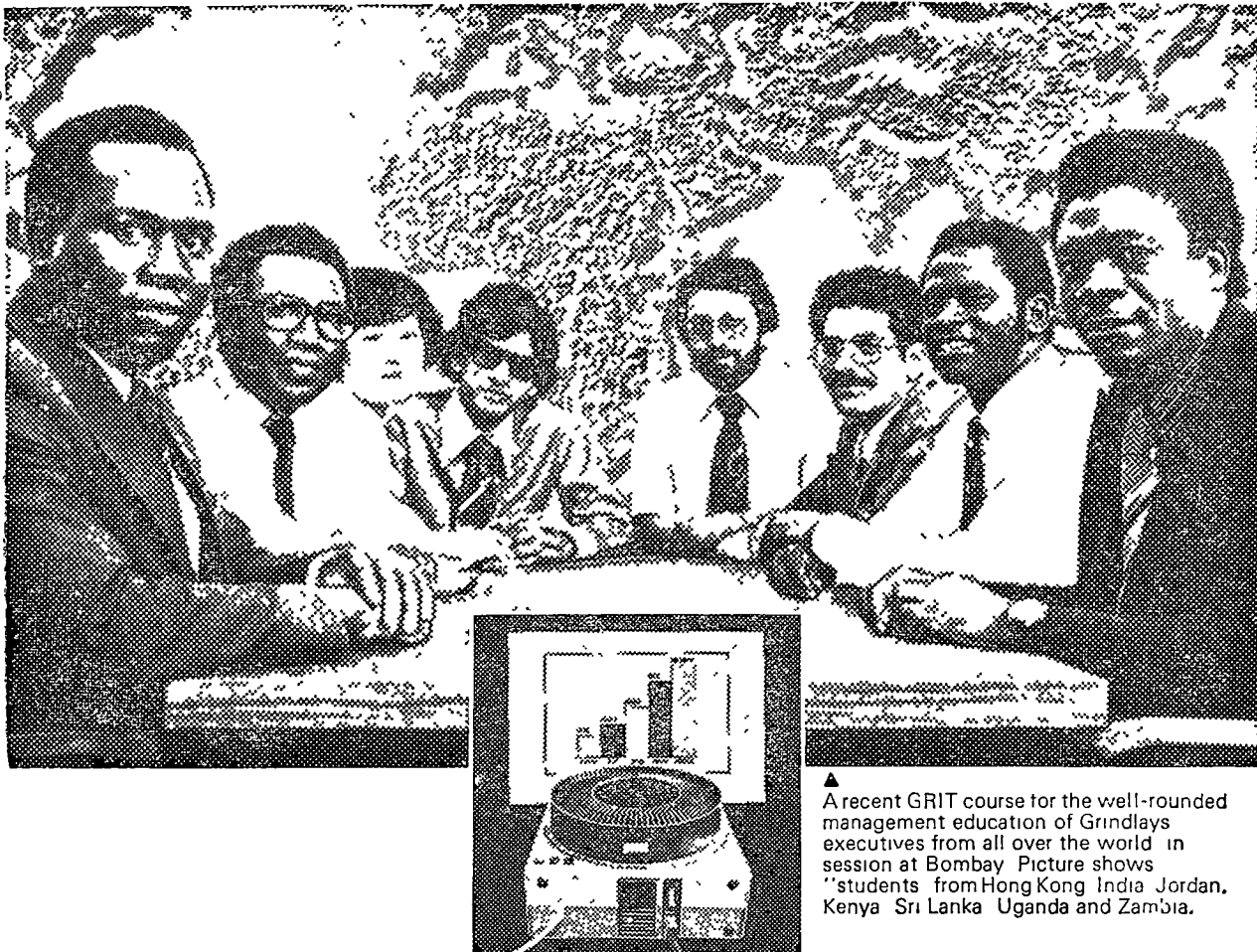
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▲ A recent GRIT course for the well-rounded management education of Grindlays executives from all over the world in session at Bombay. Picture shows "students" from Hong Kong, India, Jordan, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Zambia.

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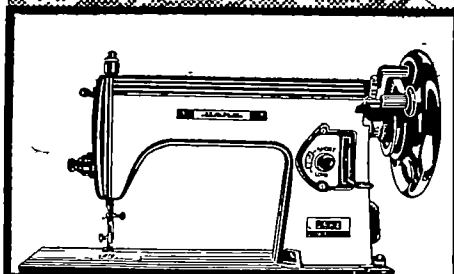
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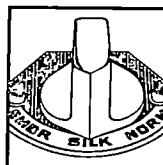


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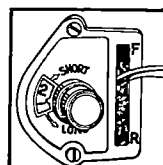
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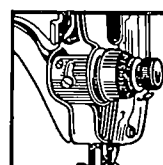
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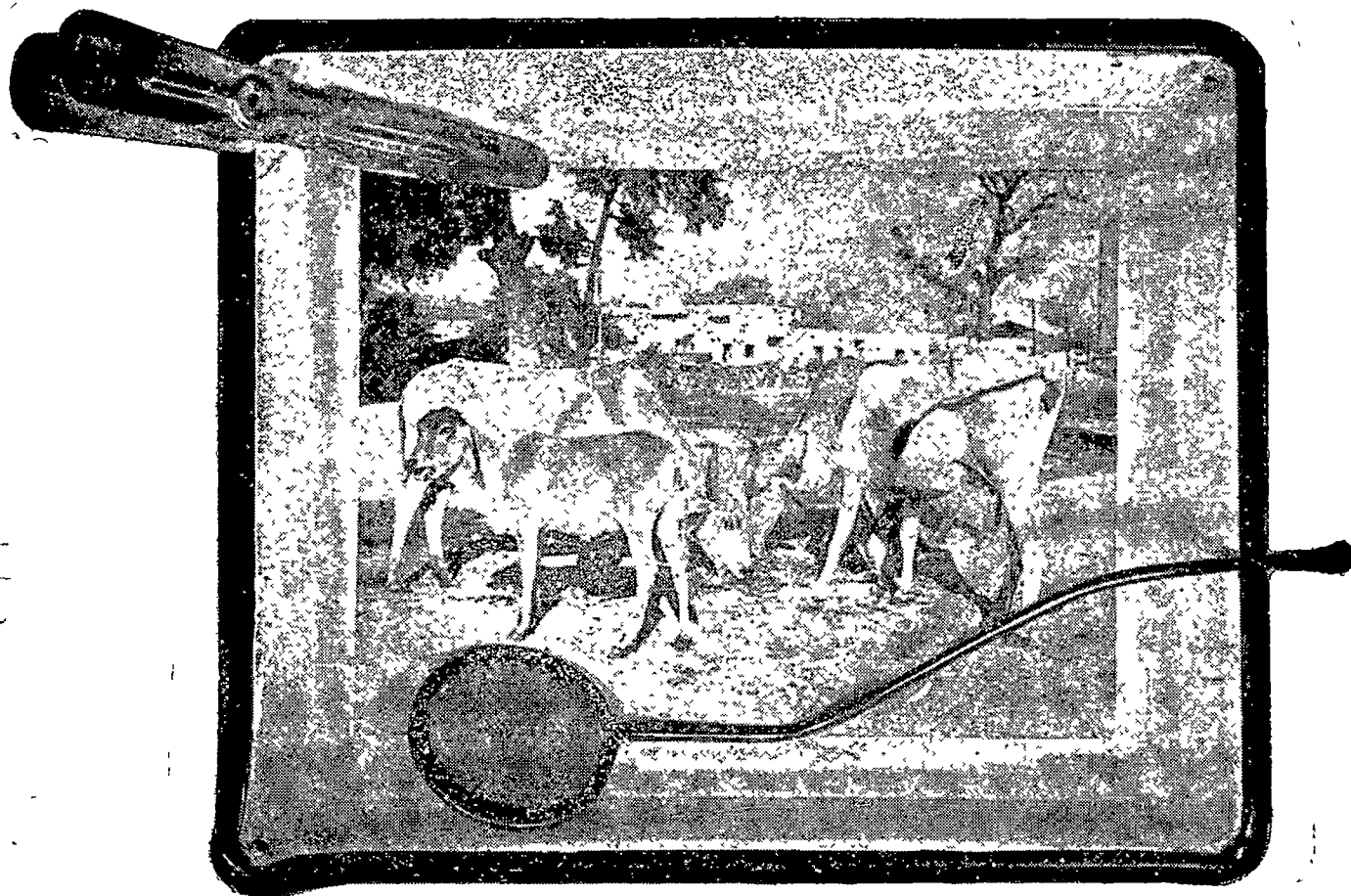


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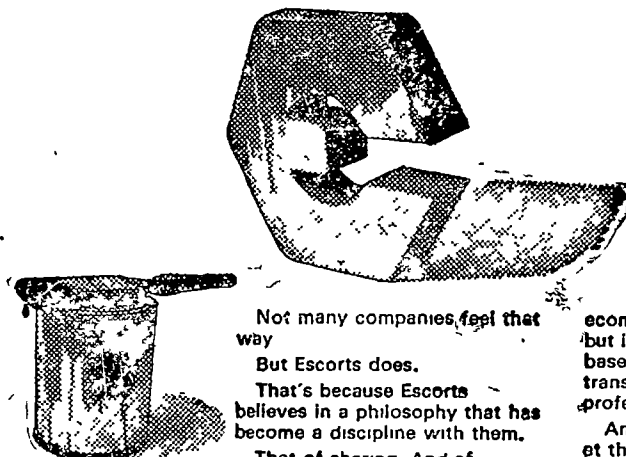
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Publisher/ROMESH THAPAR

Managing Editor/RAJ THAPAR

Production/TEJBIR SINGH

Circulation/C.B. KUMAR

Published from Malhotra Building, Janpath, New Delhi-1 Telephone 46534 Cable Address Seminar New Delhi Single copy: 10 pence; 85 cents (\$). Yearly Rs 30, £ 4, \$ 10 Three Year Rs 75, £ 10, \$ 25. Reproduction of material prohibited unless permitted.

**NEXT MONTH : THE EIGHTIES**



# 252

## POLICING

a symposium on

the problems of

law and order

symposium participants

### THE PROBLEM

A short statement  
of the issues involved

### CRIMINAL VIOLENCE

K S Shukla, Institute of Criminology  
and Forensic Science, Delhi

### THE RULE OF LAW

S C Misra, former Director, S V P  
National Police Academy, Jaipur

### COMPARATIVE PRACTICES

David H Bayley, Professor of Political  
Science, Graduate School of International  
Studies, Denver

### TRIBAL SOCIETY

T Ananthachari, D.I G of Police,  
Berhampur, Orissa

### WORKING CONDITIONS

Gouri Sen, housewife

### COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

P D Sharma, Professor of Public  
Administration, University of Rajasthan,  
Jaipur

### BOOKS

Reviewed by R K. Raghavan, Indu Malini  
and S Sen

### FURTHER READING

A select and relevant bibliography  
compiled by A K Joshi

### COVER

Designed by Dilip Chowdhury Associate



# The problem

NO study of the socio-political set-up of a country will be complete unless it includes a careful understanding of the prevalent policing arrangements. There cannot be one standard, uniform pattern of policing applicable to all the countries in the world. Also, a particular policing arrangement cannot be good for all times. Each society has to evolve its own unique police suited to its genius and needs. Such needs may vary from time to time depending on the socio-economic and political culture of the society. The world over and through the ages, the police have made a significant impact on the growth of political institutions and vice-versa. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that policing patterns and attitudes are distinctly different in democratic countries on the one hand and feudal, dictatorial and authoritarian regimes on the other.

In a democracy, policemen, while being visible symbols of the authority of the government, are expected to safeguard the interests of the society and individual citizens with regard to their basic rights. To that extent, every policeman is an agent who should maintain a proper equilibrium between the public and the government and protect one against the other. To an authoritarian government, the police is a tool very similar to the army and once it is made to function as in a dictatorship, all chances of reforming the institution are lost. Therefore, there is much to gain by being aware of the potentiality of the police to do im-



mense good or untold harm to the moral and physical well-being of the community. There are countries in the world where the police have come to be known as the best social agents. In India, even though the police have often rendered invaluable social services, particularly in times of unnatural calamities, there are nagging doubts about the manner in which they are allowed to function where political factors affect an issue.

The police affect the moral and ethical side of society's life and, therefore, it is imperative that society ensure that its police force is enlightened. The laws governing it should be such as to enable it to act in a free, fair, impartial and objective manner and the police are accountable to only such institutions which intentionally or unintentionally subserve political considerations of one group or the other.

This issue of SEMINAR is yet one more attempt to focus the attention of its readers on the importance that should be given to a public debate on a subject like this. Unless there is continuous debate and reappraisal, the police as an organisation is prone to function as a 'closed' or 'secret' wing of the party in power with all the attendant consequences, most of which are bound to be adverse to the overall public interest. Let us then unfold some of the important aspects of police functioning and throw it to public gaze.



# Criminal violence

K. S. SHUKLA

INTENTIONAL injury in any form or shape at a place in a given point of time that does not conform to behavioural expectations of the formal legal system of the land could be defined as criminal violence. Criminal violence in any shape or dimension does not, by and large, have social approval in any civilized society, though societies appear to tolerate it in some form or the other. It is likely that every crime may have an input of psychological violence for the victim as it affects him emotionally, may it be against property, person, State, public-peace, etc.

However, in criminal violence (as per the availability of official statistics) those offences are included in

which the consent of the victim is obtained through coercion or threat or actual act of physical violence to a person or a group of persons by causing some injury in terms of destruction of property or person. Cognizance by an official agency is a major distinguishing feature between violence and criminal violence, as it operates in the phenomenon of crime and unconventional acts. As per the laws, such violations would include murder, culpable homicide not amounting to murder, rape, dacoity, robbery and riot.

Criminal violence is assumed to be a normal social phenomenon, indicator of a form of human intolerance. Barring intermittent minor or



major incidents of violence generating against the background of ideology, it is subsumed that every society will have a particular level of criminal violence, depending upon the institutional structures and level of human interactions

**T**he important ingredients that lead to tension are inequality — physical, social, psychological, economic etc — by birth or later, and personality factors. In addition, social dynamics and concomitant inter-personal communications cumulatively lead to accumulation of tensions and frustrations. Society being both the prompter and restrainer of impulses and desires, one co-exists with these tensions and evolves his own methods of tension management as per values/cultural norms obtaining in the immediate environment and the social order at a given point of time

The immediate impact of the tension on an individual is in the shape of mental strain, which, if it persists, leads to mental disorders. On the behavioural level, tension may be manifested in the form of animosity, withdrawal, inactivity, fatigue and apathy. On the social plane, tensions may be expressed through ostracization, non-conformity and violence of various types i.e., signs, gestures, verbal, social and physical. The nature and pattern of violence would, however, be influenced by the ecological, biological, social, psychological and situational characteristics affecting an individual/group

The direction of these tensions — towards oneself or others — on the plank of group or individual, would be influenced by the nature and pattern of cultural processes, dominant or permissive. In a dominant culture, violence may be directed towards the self whereas in a permissive culture violence may be directed at others. Depending upon the organization of institutions and their linkages, cultural heritage, nature, pattern and mode of rationalizations that operate in a social system, these processes may not only determine the direction of violence but influence the modes of manifesting violence. In addition, the tool of violence would also be culturally determined. The selection of the tool, however, may be influenced by its access and availability

in the immediate surroundings. The justifications and rationalizations regarding the functional value of violence would depend upon the ideology, placement and position of the beneficiary or the loser in the social order in time and space.

Barring exceptions, no social order approves or provides legitimacy to physical violence as a corporate or individual activity on the levels of normative/social/legal conduct norms. However, the reaction of a person or an institution depends on his placement — victim or a perpetrator, position, sex and age. It has been witnessed that the sophisticated segments of society show greater aversion towards violence.

From the study of available literature, it also seems that violence is more pronounced in urban than rural areas. The possible reasons could be the presence of an articulate group to highlight the act and prominence given by the media to a violent incident in urban areas.

Manifestation of violence may be an indicator of a situation of blockade of other channels of communication. Although, eruption of violence in a particular situation may seem to be a spontaneous act, yet it could safely be assumed that it is a product of long term strategy/scheming/planning and that the individual must have contemplated or practised milder forms of violence in the past, as it may be difficult to resort to serious forms of violence instantaneously without a particular level of determination and courage which is generally an outcome of planning or practise in the past. Criminal violence is generally resorted to with a real or imaginary notion of gain.

**T**he level of violence in every society/community/organization/institution would be conditioned according to the nature, functional modes, demands and responsibilities in space and time. In case the functional modes and methods of a social system are revised periodically, as per the level of tolerance of the society, minimal or no problems may emerge. On the contrary, if a system is not perceptible towards these changes and does not modify

its methods of functioning, thereby creating inconsistencies between the modes of society and organization/community/institution, simple or serious forms of violence may come up. It is needless to restate the impact of criminal violence on the value system of a society and on the victim/dependent.

The consoling feature seems to be that earlier elucidated pressures not only influence the reporting and registration phenomenon of violence but condition the overall situation of crime in time and space. In addition, these factors may also be operating in other spheres of social activity. Therefore, assuming that these forces do influence the phenomenon of registration of violence, we may assume that moves and countermoves operate almost uniformly. Consequently, the official statistics may not indicate the true picture of the totality of criminal violence, but do present to us a proportionate picture of nature and extent of this phenomenon. Furthermore, the possibility of every criminal violence case being registered, particularly, in view of the growing awareness of various pressure groups, is an added factor for relying on the official statistics relating to the totality of criminal violence.

**I**n the background of these observations, an attempt to analyse the official statistics on crime and violence has been made. The overall analysis of the official statistics regarding the nature and pattern of criminal violence shows that it has been and continues to be a concern of the society. A perceptible section of India's populace takes part in this act and that the nature and pattern of criminal violence shows an increasing trend.

Table 1 indicates that a total of 11,60,520 crimes under the IPC were recorded by the police during 1975. This figure also includes crimes committed by juveniles. There was an overall increase of 54.4 per cent in cognizable crimes during the decade (1965-75) while increase in the population for the same period was 25.6 per cent. The rate of crime per one lakh population has increased by 23.0 per cent.

Comparing the figures (Tables 2 and 3) between crimes with violence



and without violence, we may derive that in 1965 about 8 per cent of the total crimes were crimes with violence which has risen to about 12 per cent in 1975. Comparing the figures per one lakh of population, we observe that in 1965 there were about thirteen acts of criminal violence which has come up to about twenty acts in 1975. All these acts were directed at others (This excludes the figures of criminal violence that might have been included in the category of miscellaneous crimes).

Both urban and rural areas account for criminal violence although the motives, nature, mode and pattern of violence may vary. Since official figures do not record them separately, we have to rely on personal experiences and accounts in providing an explanation to this situation. Official figures also indicate that criminal violence is higher amongst males than females. It is not yet known whether this ratio has similar differentiation in social reality or it is due to reporting and registration.

A further scrutiny of official statis-

TABLE-1  
Incidence of Cognizable Crime under the Indian Penal Code and Population in India, 1965 to 1975

Sl No	Year	Estimated population in millions (mid year)	Total cognizable crime under the Indian Penal Code	Rate of crime per one lakh of population
1.	1965	478.5	751615	157.1
2.	1966	489.1	794733	162.5
3	1967	499.9	881981	176.4
4	1968	511.1	862016	168.7
5.	1969	522.5	845167	161.8
6	1970	534.3	955422	178.8
7	1971	551.2	952581	172.8
8	1972	563.5	984773	174.8
9	1973	575.9	1077181	187.0
10	1974	588.3	1192277	202.7
11	1975	600.8	1160520	193.2
Percentage increase from 1965-1975		+25.6	+54.4	+23.0

tics does not bring out any other significant variation. Moreover, in the background of scanty empirical data as well as other relevant statistics, explanations have to be based on observations, discussions and

intermittent writings on this phenomenon. A probe into various attempts on violence help us in presenting the following interpretations.

(1) a man learns about legitimacy

TABLE-2

Incidence and volume of crime of violence per one lakh of population and percentage variation during 1975 over 1965/71

Sl No.	Head of Crime	1965	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	% variation + (Increase) - (Decrease) over 1965
1	Murder	12310 (2.6)	15708 (2.9)	16180 (2.9)	15475 (2.7)	17072 (3.0)	18649 (3.2)	17563 (2.9)	+42.67
2	Culpable Homicide not amounting to murder	—	—	2375 (.43)	2196 (.39)	2408 (.42)	2514 (.43)	2502 (.42)	+5.35*
3	Rape	—	—	2487 (.45)	2605 (.46)	2919 (.51)	2962 (.50)	3367 (.56)	+35.38*
4	Dacoity	4955 (1.0)	9837 (1.8)	11193 (2.0)	10411 (1.8)	10627 (1.8)	13697 (2.3)	12506 (2.1)	+152.39
5.	Robbery	8067 (1.7)	16958 (3.2)	18402 (3.3)	17054 (3.0)	18857 (3.3)	22286 (3.8)	21656 (3.6)	+168.45
6	Riots	32940 (6.9)	68331 (12.8)	64114 (11.6)	65781 (11.7)	73388 (12.7)	80547 (13.7)	67281 (11.2)	-4.53

Source . Crime in India, 1975

\*Percentage change over 1971. Statistics for the earlier years is not available



TABLE-3

Percentage Distribution of Crime Under Important I P C Crime Heads During 1971-1975						
S No.	Heads of Crime	Year				
		1971	1972	1973	1974	1975
1	Murder	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.5
2	Kidnapping & Abduction	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.9
3	Dacoity	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1
4	Robbery	1.9	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.9
5	Burglary	17.4	17.0	16.9	16.8	16.6
6	Theft	35.2	35.1	35.2	36.6	36.4
7	Riots	6.7	6.7	5.8	6.7	5.8
8	Criminal Breach of Trust	2.1	2.1	2.0	1.9	2.0
9	Cheating	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.5
10	Counterfeiting	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
11	Miscellaneous	31.5	32.4	32.4	31.1	32.2
		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

or otherwise of violence in the immediate environment which nurtures and socializes him. In the traditional social structure, where males have dominance, we observe that coercive techniques may be resorted to by the parents, without any malice intention, to provide guidance to a growing child. But the child, sometimes, may not have a similar perception and may interpret parental behaviour in a different way. Therefore, opportunities are available in the system where he witnesses, at the primary and secondary group levels, that, generally, an aggressive posture is taken to check/subside dissent or to facilitate learning of conventional values according to the desire of the ruling member. In this process he also learns that for every type of aggression/violence some rationalization is available. The processes of aggression/violence on children may differ as per the class, urban/rural areas, age and sex of the parent and the child. Aggressive posture of the parents may be more pronounced in lower classes and rural areas.

(ii) Due to the processes of industrialization, urbanization, modernization, and professionalization some changes in our social structure are discernible. These are influencing demographic, political, social and economic institutional structures and adding to the complexity of the social system. The

complex character of a society is likely to have an impact on the level of stresses and strains as well as affect the role learning modes and internalization process at various institutional levels. The concomitant influence of all these processes in our social context may be on the feeling of alienation and development of a sense of anonymity. These may have an impact on the social-control process operating at primary and secondary group levels. It is likely that sentiments of pity and probity (respect for the life and property of others) may not be adequately internalized and there is a likelihood of ambiguity in the value and norm assimilation process. Therefore, in a transitional system, every one may not have a built-in resistance towards violence and may not be governed by the feelings of compunction to avoid association with violence.

(iii) Growing acceptance of competitive model of social interaction may produce forces conducive to violence. The opportunities for success goals have never been and may not be in proportion to the claimants. This situation has further sharpened in the last few years. Due to availability of more persons than are actually required, the processes of screening and recruitment have become more complex. In screening and selection processes various extrinsic and intrinsic forces may also be

operative. Those who may not possess adequate potentialities/resources/training/determination, may continue to live with these uncertainties for sometime, but some persons whose patience level may be low, may attempt to achieve success by combining violence in their plan to get the due.

(iv) Violence may result due to the modes of functioning of the system or institutions which may not conform to the expectation of individual members. In every system, each member may not be content with its mode of functioning and may nourish grievance against the system/institution or individual functionary. Therefore, if in a social system/institution there is a built-in bias towards aggression in the socialization process or the socialization process is less effective and the system does not have or fails to provide grievance redressal mechanisms or alternative modes to canalize aggression, initially individual and later group violence/criminal violence might increase.

(v) Criminal violence may result due to the complexity in the social life. The impact of the processes of modernization may be multifarious in the Indian context. In addition, other social realities like the rising level of unemployment, changes and modifications in the pattern of land-ownership, price-rise in essential as well as other commodities, rising expectations, etc., are adding to the complexity of the pattern of life both in urban as well as rural areas. The guiding factor seems to be that, on the basis of experience, individuals/groups have learnt that the organized sectors are a greater beneficiary in a situation of confrontation with the larger system. Cumulative failures of the organised sectors in redressal of grievances or meeting the demands through constitutional methods may attenuate the level of tolerance of the participating members and the militant leadership may take over. The militant leadership, through progressive use of various forms of violence, may reach a stage where violence may turn out to be an important tool to manage the situation.

(vi) Violence may result due to the aggressive modes of functioning



of a system. The system or its functionaries may express their annoyance/irritation, in the absence of alternative modes of resolution, through violence. Invariably, such violence — directly or indirectly — may be rationalised, partly or holistically, at institutional levels. The approval may be formal or informal. This violence, if any, may be interpreted in the interest of the victim, where, depending upon the level of tolerance of that functionary, he may use it objectively or subjectively. Therefore, in some cases violence may result due to the inadequate socialization of an official functionary or the whole group or incapability to absorb authority vested by the social system.

(vii) Group violence in urban areas may come up due to the historical conditions and social realities. Prejudices, biases, suspicions, hostilities, etc., in different groups based on past and present experiences in the context of social and economic realities, could be, in some situations, projected and interpreted in such a manner that the contending groups could be charged up emotionally. In the last few years, a phenomenon is discernible that there is a widespread challenge to ascriptive status. Obviously, in the affected group there is resistance whereas those who propose to bring in change resort to various methods including violence, — individually or corporately — to assert their point of view.

Group violence in rural areas may be due to the increasing levels of education and political and social awareness, improvement in the economic status of the traditionally lower economic groups, increasing level of group sentiments in parochial, religious, caste lines, higher level of mobility, greater exposure to media, accessibility to various grievance redressal agencies, higher level of self esteem, recognition of the price of labour, etc.

(viii) It is being opined that in the last few years political institutions have started playing an overbearing role in influencing patterns of life at various institutional levels and that the political institutions have started acting as models of be-

haviour to other institutions. It is also being mentioned that the politics of violence has quite often been surfacing and violence is chosen to be an important tool by those involved in this game. If the political institutions are influencing the patterns of social life, functionaries of other institutions may not remain unaffected and may draw their own conclusions to achieve the end from the situation of violence at political institutions level. Moreover, the nature, pattern and methodologies in the institution of politics may as well provide — direct or indirect — legitimacy to operators of criminal violence.

(ix) Mass media may be both a cause and effect of violence. It may be a powerful instrument in luring/initiating/focussing attention/teaching methodology to accelerate or contain a situation of violence. In a transitional social system where situations of cultural conflict are pronounced, media may help in learning those methodologies of resolving conflict that may not have wider social approval. The media may, therefore, not only help in arriving at a decision but may also teach the modus operandi of successfully achieving the end.

Media may also be responsible, by premature/immature/over or under presentation/identifying or locating the spot/person of trouble. The reaction of the operator may be in conformity to the level, mode and pattern of presentation. As the media is meant for the consumption of a wide variety of population, the reaction may be in consonance with the coverage and expanse. Since media has started influencing the philosophy and pattern of social life, the modes and patterns of criminal violence may not remain unaffected. The nature and pattern of impact would depend on as to how the media are managed/handled.

The earlier stated factors may instantaneously or cumulatively operate — alone or in combination — to result in sporadic or strategic criminal violence, depending upon the duration, direction, mode of provocation, condition, situation, etc. The nature, shape and dimension may, however, depend on the intervention of other institutions.



# The rule of law

S C MISRA

THE concept of the Rule of Law was expounded by the well-known British jurist, Dicey in his 'Law of the Constitution'. The British Constitution, which is not a written document like ours, operates on the principles enunciated by Dicey.

The Rule of Law idea was gradually adopted by most countries of the world, though they used different phraseology to express it. The United States calls it 'Government under Law'. The communist countries express the idea as 'Socialist Legality'. The conceptions are not identical and vary from country to country but they all agree that governments should function under well-defined laws.

The International Commission of Jurists gave the concept a wider definition and this has been adopted by most democratic countries. The Rule of Law according to them is a combination of two basic ideas:

(1) There should be certain fundamental ideals concerning the purpose of organised society.

(2) There should exist a practical mechanism in terms of legal institutions, procedures and traditions by which these ideals may be given effect.

Thus, the Rule of Law aims, firstly, to lay down ideals of fundamental rights of the citizen and then to provide an effective administrative machinery through which these ideals of fundamental rights are protected and realised in actual practice. The underlying principle is that grant of rights without remedies leads to sterility, provision of remedies, without defining the objectives in the shape of rights to be protected, ends up as empty formulations.

The Rule of Law envisages that social objectives are kept in mind when dispensing the law. The law should not function in a vacuum without a social objective which it is required to accomplish. As in most communist countries, the law must not merely stay as a social legality. The connotation given to the Rule of Law in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian countries is that there should exist a strict and persistent execution of law and all other legal procedures, resulting in the establishment of a firm legal regime in the country. The legitimisation of the regime takes precedence over social objectives. In a free society, the Rule of Law is required to state clearly the purpose of the organised society along with the fundamental principles which will govern the content of the law in such a society. Our



judicial system contains all the tenets of the Rule of Law but, by a tradition coming down from colonial rule, it tends to overlook the objectives and concentrates more on formalities and the content of law

A free society is defined by the International Commission of Jurists as 'one which recognises the supreme value of human personality and conceives of all social institutions and in particular the State, as the servant rather than the master of the individual'

Thus, a free society is strongly concerned with the rights of the individual. In the historical development of free societies, the main emphasis has been laid on the rights of the individual, to assert his freedom from State interference, primarily in his spiritual and political activities, which amount to 'freedom of worship, speech and assembly'. The Rule of Law also enjoins that in societies like ours, where the level of education and economic security is low, emphasis be also laid on another kind of right, viz., a claim of every individual on the State to have access to the minimum material means, without which it is claimed, the individual cannot realise his right to spiritual and political freedom. Without economic freedom from want, all other freedoms are meaningless. From this principle follows the concept of a welfare State. The Rule of Law is not merely concerned with an effective enforcement of laws, as sometimes misunderstood, but also with the presentation of social and economic justice in the community. The laws of the land have to reflect both the social and economic needs of the society.

The Rule of Law is supposed to work through the following four parameters

- 1 The Legislative
- 2 The Executive
3. The Criminal Process, and
4. The Judiciary and Legal professions.

All these four parameters are restrained through the social and economic objectives stated in the Constitution of the country. Although the Constitution provides for

the three recognised wings of the State, i.e., the legislative, the executive and the judiciary, it also ensures through checks and balances, that none can violate the Rule of Law. Thus, constitutional limitations on legislative powers are enforceable through the courts. This power of courts is deemed to be inherent in the judicial process. The legislature must not interfere with the citizen's rights to 'due process', so far as legislative, executive and judicial fair-play is concerned. Similar safeguards are provided in the Constitution for other parameters also. There is an inbuilt system of control over the executive through the legislature and also the judiciary by means of *habeas corpus*.

The police falls in the ambit of the parameters of the executive and criminal process. It is a fundamental principle of the Rule of Law that the power to govern, i.e., to execute the laws which have been duly passed by the representatives of the people, cannot be exercised arbitrarily in a free society. Those who exercise such powers must act within the law and be responsible for their actions to the people, which ultimately means, the legislatures. The judicial control over police arbitrariness comes through the multifarious statutes in the law books that control police functioning and finally through the process of *Habeas Corpus* as mentioned earlier. People aggrieved by police action are supposed to seek redress from legislatures through their elected representatives or the Courts of law.

The difficulty is caused by the fact that in all modern societies, the executive is armed out of necessity with wide powers in formulating the details of the laws called the Rules and also in the application of the laws. The police as the strong arm of the executive power is mainly responsible for the application of the laws. It derives from the laws and the rules a wide range of discretionary powers which provide for considerable latitude of action. These extend to discretions in the sphere of arrests, searches, questioning, grant of bail and even filing of charge sheets. The Constitution does provide for adequate safeguards against misuse of executive powers, in particular to

ensure that fundamental rights, essential to the rule of law are preserved. But the main problem is not the inadequacy of the safeguards when powers are misused. It is the manner in which the powers are actually exercised and the observance of the limits by the police that determines their respect for the Rule of Law. Indeed integrity, restraint and discipline of the police force is the hallmark of the Rule of Law.

The police as the chief enforcing authority at the disposal of the executive, is always in danger of being a party to the possible unlawful activities of the executive. The exposures made by the Shah Commission of the excesses of the Emergency period have very clearly brought out the dangers of such a combination. The police have, therefore, to clearly recognise the fundamental principle of the Rule of Law, viz., that all laws must be enforced firmly but impartially, without fear or favour, malice or vindictiveness. The police are not to question the propriety or necessity of any duly enacted law. It is the duty of the legislatures to ensure that the enacted laws serve the social and economic objectives laid down in the Constitution and the police are not concerned with it. If the laws impinge on individual freedom or his fundamental rights, the remedy lies with the judicial courts empowered to decide such questions.

Another great temptation for the police, which goes counter to the requirements of the Rule of Law, is to identify themselves with sectional or group interests. Even if such interests are in respect of the majority sections voted to power by the people, this is not permissible under the Rule of Law. Any such tendencies are highly dangerous to national interest. They can lead to an authoritarian rule, cutting at the very root of democracy. In such a situation, the checks and balances set by the Constitution go awry. The judiciary can be pressurised into submission and made to toe the line of the executive authority. The legislatures can be subdued and silenced by manipulative policies. Even the stalwarts among them can be put on the fence by threats of physical harm and extra-judicial action. This is



actually what the country faced during the twenty months of the Emergency a couple of years ago. The police bear a great responsibility in this respect, to keep democracy on the rails, through their impartiality and conformity to the Rule of Law.

It will have to be admitted that while we took care to enshrine in our Constitution all the noblest ideals of the Rule of Law, enough attention has not been paid to ensure their implementation by the various segments. True, the judicial system in the country has all the ingredients of the Rule of Law. The legislatures, by all appearances are conforming to the constitutional provisions, when framing the laws. But have any concrete steps been taken to orient the police to the Rule of Law? It can be argued that the procedures and rules laid down for the police fulfil all the requirements of the Rule of Law, such as

- (1) production of accused after arrest before a court of law within the shortest specified period,
- (2) limitations of powers of arrest,
- (3) remedies against wrongful arrests,
- (4) speedy method of access to courts,
- (5) burden of proof on the police,
- (6) safeguards against malicious searches and soon

**B**ut, do the police in actual practice act in accordance with the principles that govern the spirit of these procedures? It will have to be admitted that there has been very little change in the police approach to law, the society and the judicial process after the attainment of Independence. Their approach remains what it was during British rule. Burying of crime, padding and manipulations in investigation, illegal arrests, third degree in interrogation, fudging of records — all continue unabated. The environment at the police station remains what it was before. Corruption and illegalities and all other evils for which the police were known, continue on the same pattern. The distrust by the law of the police is unaltered. This is a standing stigma on our democracy, when in a people's government, the police and the people cannot but be one and the same. All attempts at reform of the

law have made the position worse for the police in this respect. It is apparent that no effort has been made to make the police conform to the Rule of Law in the real sense.

The police in India continue to serve their masters. In the first instances, the masters were the British rulers. Thereafter, they served the Indian rulers. There is no sign of the Indian police becoming the people's police, prepared to guard their interest against oppression of the government and political bosses. The Rule of Law, among other principles, embodies protection of the individual against arbitrary action of the government and abhors any kind of arbitrary rule, whatever be the legal system in force.

**U**nless constitutional safeguards are inbuilt in the system, we cannot get away from the fact that the police would remain an instrument of the government, which really means the political party in power. For, the government for all practical purposes, is an abstraction, the visible signs of authority are the political masters on whom the police depends for their very existence. Because of this same position, the police zealously guarded the interest of the British rulers during the pre-independence era and later of the majority political groups. The well-being of the police forces as a whole and also of the individual members, depends on the goodwill of those in power. It follows naturally that the police find it convenient as well as advantageous to align themselves with those who can benefit them and improve their future prospects.

The bane of political pressure on the police survives and even flourishes because of this concentrated power for good or evil of the police is in the hands of a few politicians at different levels. The Shah Commission brought this out pointedly but did not suggest any remedies. The government was asked to find ways and means to correct this ominous trend. The government has very conveniently shelved the matter for the present till they get the recommendations of the Police Commission.

As everyone knows, both the police system and judicial function-

ing are elitist. They both cater to the rich and the influential. The poor man cannot hope for justice either from the police or the courts. This was the position during British rule and it is the same today after Independence. It is our daily experience that the attitude of courts is discriminatory and favours the rich, whether it is the question of grant of bail, adjournment of a date of hearing, permission for appeals or revisions and so on. The police have also been toeing this very line, may be, not by option so much as by force of circumstances. If this is the position, where is the equality before law, equal justice for all and all the other laudatory ideals promised to the nation in the Constitution? Where is the Rule of Law of which we talk about day-in and day-out?

The police have a very tricky task to perform under the Rule of Law. On the one hand, as custodians of internal order of the community, they are required to suppress individual liberty and freedom and on the other hand, as agents of the Rule of Law, they have to guard the interest of the individual and protect the weakest among the weak. In trying to achieve this the police has to do a very delicate balancing feat. It has to maintain a critical balance between the interest of the majority on the one side and that of the individual and minority groups on the other side. An irresponsible police by leaning heavily on one side can completely upset the Rule of Law and jeopardise the very foundation of democracy. This kind of delicate and impartial functioning of the police cannot be achieved unless provisions are made to grant some autonomy to the police and to free it from the stranglehold of the politicians, the secretarial systems of government and at the same time, provide for a measure of accountability directly to the public.

**O**ur leaders are living in a make-believe world that the Government of India Act of 1935, which was a kind of Constitution for the country during the British rule, provided for most of the ingredients of the Rule of Law, all of which was further ensured by the legal system and all the major laws such as the IPC, Cr. P. C. and



Evidence Act which took good care of the liberty of the individual. These were lauded all over the world as upholding the highest ideals of jurisprudence, that a person is deemed to be innocent unless proved to be otherwise, and that a thousand accused may be acquitted but one innocent man should not be convicted. The alibi given is that when all the requirements of the Rule of Law were fulfilled by the adoption of the entire system left by the British in toto, where was the need for a new system. A change of policy from British days was enshrined in the Constitution, but the system was alright.

This argument is obviously not valid when we examine how the system worked during British rule. The magistrates dispensing justice at the lower levels were under the thumb of the District Magistrate whose only relevance was to guard the interest of the rulers. The British judges manning the High Courts and important Sessions Courts were sent out to ensure that the British flag was kept flying. The police was kept under the District Magistrate so that it could be manipulated. The preamble of the Police Act, 1861, stated that the police was an instrument (in the hands of the State) for prevention and detection of crime. The police was from its very inception intended to play a partisan role. There was then no question of their acting independently or in the public interest. The magistrates were no doubt unshackled through the placing of magistrates under the judiciary but no change was made for the police. The constitutional dream of a separation of the executive and the judiciary remains unfulfilled when the police are completely under the executive. Police functions, after all, are quasi-judicial.

If the police are expected to work in accordance with the Rule of Law, drastic changes will have to be made in their attitudes, approach to problems and the people, legal powers and procedures, accountability, control etc. Mere rhetoric and platitudes are of no avail.

The minimum that the police must do to protect the Rule of Law is to give up all kinds of illegalities which they commit either to promote vested

interests of individual groups and sometimes their own on the alibi of working in the interest of the case. They should sacrifice to act against all arbitrary action whether of individuals, groups or the government itself. They should be able to resist pressures to act illegally, even from the highest quarters. Their actions at all times must be according to law, impartial and just and intended to protect the weak and the downtrodden. These are the minimum requirements of the Rule of Law for the police. There should be no hesitation in actively promoting social content also to the Rule of Law, as envisaged by the Constitution.

The police must give up the old outlook that they are merely to preserve law and order and maintain peace. The Rule of Law requires that they take active part in the socio-economic reconstruction of the country. They cannot stand apart as mere spectators in this great task. There are constraints for the police even in the criminal law process because of the antiquated judicial system and rigidity of law courts but those are not insurmountable if there is the will to face them squarely. In our country, courts have become sacrosanct for no rhyme or reason. We have placed the judiciary at an undeservedly high pedestal when they have all the human failings. Their approach is merely legalistic and not human. There is no one to tell them that they have a social obligation. They have to be as much a party to the social and economic renaissance of the country as any one else. Some senior judges have no doubt started speaking out in this regard which is a good sign, but a national debate is called for on the new role of the judiciary.

In any case, I believe that by their uprightness, impartiality and correct approach the police can also do a lot in changing the outlook of the judiciary. Once the police succeeds in getting closer to the people for which conformity to the Rule of Law is the only way, all their difficulties will be solved. The Indian public is simple, having a small percentage of self-seekers, and I am sure they will generously respond when they realise that the police is a friend and not an enemy.



# Comparative practices

DAVID H. BAYLEY

THE police function is the essence of government because the basic task of any government is to maintain internal order. If citizens are unable to go about their daily work in a safe and predictable manner, one would be forced to say that the government has ceased to operate effectively. So, the police is one of the essential services and hence a re-evaluation of police affairs in any country raises profound issues of political, moral and philosophic import. Different countries of the world have approached the subject of police reform and police activities in a different manner. In the U S A, where there has been a recurring cycle of police scandals and corruption followed by setting up of reform commissions, the question of police reform has been viewed in a narrow and technical sense and it has been

treated as a matter that can be solved through machines, improved forensic devices, reorganisation of administration etc., and the more profound questions of the way in which the police relate to the fundamental political institutions of the country have not been asked.

In the United Kingdom and Japan, however, a much broader perspective has been brought to bear upon the question of police reform. The Japanese have reconsidered their police system twice: once in 1870, during the beginning of the modernisation of Japan and, again, with slight prodding from the American occupation, in 1946-47. On both these occasions, the Japanese did not take a narrow view of police reforms and addressed themselves to broader questions and principles like the kind of police that has to be created to command the respect and understanding of the citizens.

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\*Summary of a talk delivered by the author



The appointment of the National Police Commission represents a historic moment in the life of modern India. The point to be remembered is that when one begins to re-evaluate and re-examine policing, one is looking at the very essence of government in any country. On an initial reading of the terms of the National Police Commission in India, it appears that the Commission has adopted a very broad perspective and has eschewed the narrow and technical approach adopted in America and followed the experience of Great Britain as well as Japan in examining the more profound questions relating to the role of the police in a democratic context.

Policing is a very complex and subtle affair, though there is in the public a tendency to over-simplify police matters. An examination of some special aspects of police functioning like police image, police accountability, political relations of the police and police role in some of the democratic countries of the world will reveal how the world's democracies have responded in different ways to these aspects of police functioning and highlight the relationship between the people and the police and the government in these countries.

One basic problem encountered by police administrators is to create a regard for police work, both in the minds of policemen themselves and that of the public. It will not be possible to motivate police officers unless they think well of themselves and their work. If police officers are not proud of what they are and the profession they have joined, enhanced pay and perquisites will not reach into their hearts and impel them to superior performance. It is also true that the police would not get the cooperation of the public unless the latter think well of them and have some measure of trust and respect for their role in society.

It is, however, terribly difficult to create regard for the police because they are performing a job which is essentially dirty, distasteful and which involves contact with the very worst elements in any society. It is also difficult to give high status to a task which by its very nature is to be performed by men and women who are

virtually indistinguishable from the masses of people they are policing. It is easy to accord status to the members of the Bench and Bar who are highly educated, few in number, fairly well-paid and carry out their work in congenial surroundings. The police role is not like that at all in any society. As a very large number of people are to be recruited, it is difficult to have high recruitment standards.

Different countries of the world have approached this problem of improving the image of the police in different ways. The United States has tried to raise the image of the police officer, both within the force and among the public, by giving him authority and initiative and allowing him to act, not contrary to law, but with very little supervision. In the United States, a police administrator holds the view that the police officer should be encouraged to take responsibility and not supervised so much as to take away his initiative, which the American officer prizes above all other things — his joy in the job.

In Japan, by contrast, this problem of image has been met in an entirely different but equally effective way. There entry into the police force is terribly difficult. Young Japanese police officers of the rank of Constables seldom take decisions on their own. Senior police officers always come in the picture and take upon themselves the responsibility for these decisions. This is just the reverse of the American experience. This, however, does not create a feeling among the Japanese police officers that they are always at the beck and call of somebody else. The Japanese police try to engender among themselves a feeling of being in a close-knit family and hence this tight supervision is not resented, as it would be in the United States, because the supervisor is considered an elder brother or a father and consequently when the young officer approaches a senior officer for decision, he is in effect calling on an elder brother or father to cooperate with him. As a result of this feeling of being in a family, the police officer in Japan feels that he is a part of the privileged elite, even though the junior officer has very little autonomy of the American sort.

In the United Kingdom, the high status of the Bobby stems from the fact that he is considered a crown officer and not the appointee of a government or a political regime. This is the tradition which has been built up ever since 1829 by Maine and Rowan, the first two Police Commissioners of the London Metropolitan Police. In Britain when a police officer joins service, he is not merely taking up an occupation or an ordinary job, but feels that he has been called on to join the service of the Queen. This attitude, this orientation of being a crown officer, has developed among the British police officers a high sense of self-respect and also generated among the public, respect for the role of the police.

While dealing with the question of status, one point that deserves notice is that at the heart of the criminal justice system in any country there is a paradox, an inverse relationship between the amount of discretion which the agents of law have and the status which they enjoy. In the criminal justice system, the greatest amount of discretion is enjoyed or at least possessed, by a police officer. The entire trigger mechanism of the criminal justice process is in the hands of the police officer and not in those of the lawyer, prosecutor or judge. Though the kind of authority and discretion given to the police officers around the world is remarkable, at the same time, among all the agents of the criminal justice system, the lowest status and prestige has been accorded to him.

The democratic countries of the world like the United States, Japan, the U.K. and France have ensured in different ways and by adopting different mechanisms right behaviour and conduct on the part of the police officers. In the United States emphasis is on external mechanisms of check and balance to ensure police accountability. The American citizens through the press, the courts, civil suits and political supervision, etc., have tried to ensure that the police do not run amuck but adhere to correct norms of behaviour. The Americans have great faith in these external mechanisms of supervision and they feel that the supervisory



authorities can watch the police like hawks and pull them up when they tend to go astray

The situation is almost the reverse in Japan. The Japanese have reposed extra-ordinary faith and trust in the police and delegated to it the entire responsibility of remaining straight and proper. Supervisory bodies like the Police Commission are seldom used. In the United States, suits against police officers are very common, but in Japan this is unthinkable, although the Japanese can sue police officers. In the United Kingdom, the arrangement is some kind of a half-way house, emphasis is both on internal responsibility and external supervision. But even in the U.K., compared to Japan, there is lesser emphasis on internal mechanisms of supervision. France represents another pattern where supervision on the police is exercised not by the public or public bodies but by civil bureaucrats. In other words, the mechanisms of supervision in France are external to the police but internal to the bureaucracy. Thus, the U.K., France, Japan and the United States represent different patterns with significantly different mechanisms to ensure police accountability.

In this connection, one point to be borne in mind is that effective supervision of the police must come from inside and not from a body outside the force. If effective supervision does not come from within, it is sure to fail. This, however, does not mean that external mechanisms of supervision like civilian review boards, police commissions, the courts etc., are of no use or importance. They do serve as the second line of defence and remind the police that if they fail to set their house in order, these deterrents outside the police establishment can also be utilised. The fact, however, remains that no society can rely on external supervisory bodies only for ensuring proper behaviour.

The question of the relationship between the police and the politicians has two dimensions (a) the role, if any, of the police in partisan politics and (b) the nature and quantum of direction given by the politicians in police affairs. Throughout its history France has allowed the police considerable role in partisan

politics. They have been used for supervising elections, mounting political surveillance and making sure that certain parties are oppressed. But at the same time, the French police have been directly controlled by the bureaucrats, and not by the politicians. In other words, though the police have been insulated from politics, they have been used for intrusions into that sphere.

In America, the police has no political role at all and the Americans have not allowed them to dabble in politics or even to supervise political campaigns. At the same time, the American police throughout most of their history have received orders directly from the politicians and the amount of political control of the American police until very recently, has been enormous.

In the United Kingdom, the police has been successfully insulated from direct political supervision. The political role of the police in modern Japan is also very small. Japanese police supervise the political conduct of the politicians under the Election Law, etc., but never take commands from them. The tradition has now grown up in Japan that the police will remain untouched by the politicians. About a few years ago, the Prime Minister of Japan, Tanaka, wanted to appear before a national meeting of senior police officers to deliver a welcome address. The Japanese press criticised him severely for this unwarranted intrusion into police affairs and he could not deliver the address. Where one gets this kind of response in a society, the police are safe. If this is not there, institutional safeguards like public safety commissions etc., can be ignored and swept aside by the politicians. Actually, there are no mechanisms which can protect the police in all circumstances against an over reaching tyrannical government.

In any democracy, ultimate control of the police remains in the hands of the politicians who have been elected by the people and who ultimately are accountable to the public. But interference by the politicians who are untrained in the daily affairs of the police, is not desirable and they should be prevented from intruding into police work.

The police also should develop a professional view that their allegiance is only to law, not to the letter of the law but to the spirit of the law, and not to anybody else.

In the United States as well as in the United Kingdom, police officers have very few tasks which are assigned to them by the government. When the Bobby in U.K. or the American patrolman goes in the streets, what he does is largely determined by the requests received by him from the public; it is the public that determines how the police officers spend their time. But in countries like Germany and France, the amount of time which the patrol officer has on his own is very much smaller and he performs a whole series of tasks like inspections, checkings, weights and measures, riot duties, etc., which are given not by individual members of the public but by the government. But even in these continental countries the present trend is in the direction of citizen disposal, and not government disposal of the police.

Another trend worth noticing, particularly in the United Kingdom and in the United States, is that a large number of requests from citizens for police assistance do not relate to any crime-related activity. About 85% of the calls for service of American and British constables and patrolman do not involve infractions of the law. In effect, in these two countries the patrol officer is acting fundamentally as a 'peace officer' and not as a law officer. He is performing general functions of service and social amelioration to the citizens and not functioning, curiously enough, as an agent of the law. The same situation prevails in Japan also, where the police are responsible for even judging and enforcing laws. But at the same time, there are countries like Mexico, where the police receive more directives from government and less service requests from the citizens. It seems that with social evolution and progress, the demands on the police became more varied, ambiguous and the public come to the police with all kinds of requests for matters like psychiatric help, settlement of domestic disputes, and first aid.



# Tribal society

T ANANTHACHARI

POLICING an area can be effective only to the extent that it is able to respond to the needs of the community which it aspires to serve. Therefore, it stands to reason that there cannot be one standard type of policing which can meet all types of requirements and problems. That is why there are distinctly different types of arrangements in metropolitan cities, town and urban areas and villages and rural limits. Environment, geographical considerations, population and the numerous aspects of the socio-economic and political life of the area have to be given due consideration in deciding the type of policing styles for a particular area.

A study of the culture of the people like family, marriage, ritual

and belief, concept of law and justice prevalent in that society and man's behaviour in an institutionalised form and his reaction to the modern administrative set-up, etc., is a prerequisite to the laying down of appropriate laws and the evolution of suitable enforcement machinery. Institutions so evolved have necessarily to be functionally integrated. Otherwise, it may be difficult to maintain an equilibrium between the structure and functions and the former may become redundant.

Unfortunately, these basic considerations seem to have been overlooked at the time when policing, administrative and legal, machineries were designed and set up in the typical tribal areas. In fact, the



laws which govern the tribal peoples and their policing arrangements appear to be anomalous and out of tune with actual needs.

**T**he tribal population is over 38 million accounting for nearly 7% of the total population of the country. They are spread in small numbers in the various parts of Orissa, M.P., Bihar, West Bengal, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura and Lakshdweep besides other States. In Orissa, the tribal population accounts for 24.6% and in M.P. 20.13% (with an absolute figure of over 84 lakhs in M.P.). There are in all 427 different scheduled tribes in the country, of whom 62 are in Orissa and 58 in M.P. These tribal groups are ethnically, culturally and linguistically different from the non-tribals. The various groups and sub-groups differ amongst themselves in levels of advancement. There are those like the Abhujmadias, Baigas, Bharias and Pahadi-Korwas who are yet to come to the stage of settled agriculture, while those like the Bhilalas and Halvas are advanced cultivators and have taken full advantage of agricultural developments and modern technology.

The tribal people are distinguished by codes of behaviour and mode of social control, which are different from the ones to which most of us are accustomed. They have particular community organisations which have been evolved over the centuries to suit their genius. For example, they have an elaborate panchayat system which seems to be more dynamic and advanced than our legal system. While in most cases the Patel or the Headman is the leader, in matters relating to religion, witchcraft etc., it is the priest or the witch doctor who takes over the leadership. It is extremely interesting to note that tribal society considers all wrongs to be against the society in as much as their laws do not recognise the difference 'between crime and the tort'. It is important for society that all decisions arrived at are unanimous and not by a mere majority vote.

According to the 1961 census, over 2 lakhs of tribals of Orissa were categorised as 'A', who appear to be unaffected by modern civilisation,

live in their own world in hills and jungles out of contact with the outside world. They have preserved their primitive culture unsullied. Over 12 lakhs come under category 'B' who have shown slight traces of change by contact with the outer world but they have preserved their dance, music etc., intact. It is those who belong to category 'C' numbering over 30 lakhs, who have shown signs of acclimatisation in varying degrees after the inroads made by modern culture and advance. Keeping these factors in mind and the special needs of the scheduled tribes, article-46 in Part-IV of the Constitution (elaborating the directive principles of State policy) provides that 'the State promote the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitations'.

**H**ave we been able to reflect these in the manner in which we have organised the administration of the predominantly tribal areas in our country? Even though the tribal population is fragmented into a large number of groups, the impression should not be given that it is difficult to administer them as viable units. The vast majority live in a few limited areas of the country. Out of the total population of 20.43 lakhs in Koraput District of Orissa, (third largest district in the country) 11.51 lakhs (51%) constitute the tribal population. In the Kalahandi District, also of Orissa, they account for 3.4 lakhs out of 11.63 lakhs (nearly 33%) and in Phulbani 2.5 lakhs out of 6.21 lakhs (more than 33%). In the case of M.P., the tribals who form 20.13% of the total population, live mostly in a few districts of the State. The same is true of the tribals of Bihar, West Bengal etc. It is, therefore, clear that they are concentrated in certain areas to permit of a distinct administrative arrangement suited to their needs.

Under British rule, there was constant examination of this matter which led to special administrative arrangements in typical tribal belts. The policy of 'laissez-faire' followed by the British yielded good results in the beginning but subsequently it

gave place to rebellions from the tribals. Resistance to the British administration became more and more pronounced because it tried to administer the tribals according to rules and regulations based on concepts which were alien to their society. Several upheavals against injustice were put down with harsh measures by the British Government. Some of the important ones relate to the Santal Revolution of 1856 against oppressive money lenders; the Sardari agitation of 1887 against compulsory labour, periodical contributions and illegal enhancement of rent by landlords, the Sirsa movement of 1895 directed against Hindu landlords, money lenders and Christian missionaries, the Koya revolt of 1862 against various oppressive laws.

It is such resistance from the tribals which led to serious efforts to understand the basic concept underlying the philosophy of law and justice which they had and to evolve the most appropriate policies for administration. Unfortunately, these changes have been half-hearted and inadequate. At no point of time was an attempt made to look at the totality of the problem.

**T**aking note of the special features as well as the experience gained about the need for special attention to tribal areas, the British arranged to administer them according to special laws, which usually prescribed simple and elastic forms of judicial and administrative procedures. The 'Ganjam and Vishakapatnam Act of 1839' is an example of such an effort. Later, these areas were declared 'Scheduled Districts' and the administration was conducted in accordance with the 'Scheduled District Act of 1874'. The significance of this is that it provided for extension of the laws in force in any part of British India with special restrictions and modifications as were deemed fit. The Government of India Act of 1919 continued the administration of these areas separately from the rest of the provinces. They were removed from the purview of the legislature with different degrees of exclusion. Thus arose the two categories of 'wholly excluded areas' and 'areas of modified exclusion'. The Government of India Act of 1935



also embodied sections which provided for 'excluded areas' and 'partially excluded areas'.

The special features which have to be taken into account in evolving the most appropriate law enforcement arrangement would be (a) environment, (b) social and cultural heritage, (c) life style, (d) economic aspects, (e) language and (f) religious and other influences. Scholars like Sarat Chand Roy and Dr Elwin studied the 'crime and punishment' aspect of the tribal people and they came to the conclusion that it mostly depended on the value system obtaining in society and pointed out the inappropriateness of our laws for judging crimes in tribal society. It is in this context that we have to see whether our legal and policing systems are in keeping with the spirit and needs of society.

**T**he tribal peoples live in mountainous and dense jungle areas where approach is extremely difficult due to lack of proper communication. Even today, extensive tribal tracts are without roads, leave alone railways. The terrain is often rugged and somewhat inhospitable. It, therefore, stands to reason that in such areas, police presence should be so arranged, that it will not be necessary for either the tribals or the police, particularly the former, to cover long distances to reach a police post. This can take days together and upsets the rhythm of their well-regulated life amidst nature. Moreover, tribals find it extremely difficult to accept (and feel at home) our bureaucratic procedures and other legal formalities. In fact, in many areas this single difficulty has had the effect of dissuading them from approaching the agents of our modern administration. Therefore, it is of particular importance to ensure that police facilities are made available in the vicinity of the settlement itself.

Since the tribals are sparsely spread over wide areas, the traditional yardstick for policing (on the basis of population which may be some time realistic for urban areas) cannot apply in the tribal context. This is an area which requires detailed study and the formulation of new approaches. Instead of locating a single police station manned by 10-12

persons to cover vast areas, it may be worthwhile to locate a large number of single-man police posts so that a policeman is available for contact within a reasonable distance. The present arrangement appears to have discouraged the tribals, for in a many of their typical areas, less and less crimes are being reported to the police.

A tribal has a set pattern of life which is dictated by his environmental conditions and social demands. Thus, his time is accounted for fairly fully by catering to the minimum required agricultural operations, fulfilling his social, religious and cultural obligations (including participation in rituals), and attending 'weekly hats'. This last mentioned item is his main contact with the outside world, as also a social occasion, which he looks forward to. It is also a major opportunity for him to get his other daily needs for the coming week. Therefore, he finds it extremely difficult to deviate from his routine and find time to meet the demands of our administrative system.

Our attempts to extend the type of police system which is in practice in the rest of the country to tribal areas has not been very successful. Time and again it has been observed that when anything takes the tribal person away from his other more traditional, social and cultural obligations, he is not inclined to oblige.

**T**ribal people have a distinct social and cultural heritage of which they are proud. They have a set of norms and values which are laid down by the community and each member adheres to these as we would to legal enactments. May be, because these social and cultural traditions have helped them to live as a distinct group and fight against further onslaught from others, they are extremely proud of their heritage. Studies by Grigson have brought out instances of murder among the Marias which had remained unreported because according to the values of the tribals, they were justified. It is in this context that studies by Sarat Chand Roy and Dr Elwin are very valuable. Even today, the village headman plays a crucial role in dealing with matters of crime, deviation

and other complaints relating to social conduct. It is customary practice for the headman to be informed of the commission of a crime in the particular society. Further action in this regard would be more or less left to him.

In matters involving petty offences, justice is often dispensed according to the prevalent norms of the particular tribal society. It may be anything from merely spitting in the presence of the offender to excommunication from the village for a specified time. In more serious cases, after the details are ascertained by the headman, a formal decision is taken to report the matter to the police. This may entail delay. If we apply our norms to all these cases we may hold tribal leadership guilty under some provision of law. But will we be justified? This is a constant problem faced by police agencies in tribal areas. It is much better to give legal recognition to age old institutions of tribal societies. Our efforts should be to integrate such institutions into the laws and procedure of the land rather than vice-versa.

Once attempts are made on the above lines, it will be easy to deal with tribal people. There are numerous instances where someone who might have killed another person is handed over to the police, complete with all the evidence and witnesses, by the headman but only after 2-3 days of feasting and merry making. This is because the entire village, being convinced of the crime committed by the individual would like to bid him farewell in a formal way. They would miss each other for a few years. Is this not a very civilised way of dealing with an erring person?

**A**ny effort to enforce laws which go contrary to the norms dictated by traditional values of the particular tribal community, not only surprises its members but also causes serious resentment. For all practical purposes, such an enforcement of rules and regulations acts as an external and foreign influence and upsets their life style. In many cases, it positively offends them. It is most important that police officers should use their utmost discretion in enforcing normal laws in a tribal situation.



It is time that a detailed study is undertaken to help formulate more appropriate legal structures for them.

**S**uch conflicts arise in many of the social customs which have found acceptance among the tribal people. Marriage by elopement is a clear example of the conflict between our traditional laws and theirs. The Bhagoriya festival among the Bhils and similar festivals in other groups help those boys keen to marry girls of their choice but prevented from doing so by their parents, to elope with the help and connivance of other members of the community. Apart from the desire of the community to accommodate the emotional feelings of young people, there is an inbuilt economic aspect inherent in this arrangement, because the bridegroom escapes the requirement of having to pay a high price for his bride, which he may not be able to afford. After elopement, the elders on both sides, with some show of reluctance and anger, solemnise the wedding. It is clear that the Bhagoriya was evolved to provide an appropriate forum for eligible boys and girls (invariably below 15 years of age). An overzealous police official might see a case of kidnapping or abduction in such a festival and may destroy an indigenous yet most appealing aspect of tribal life.

The custom of elopement also exists among the Gujjars of Kashmir. In some tribal communities, it is reported that marriages are sometimes formalised even before the child is born. Among the Gonds and Juangs of Orissa infant marriages are common which is against our own norms. Polygamy is widely accepted among the Koyas, Orans, Holvas, Saoras and many others.

The 'Ritlaha' custom followed by the Santhals is yet another example which points to the need for discretion by the law enforcement agencies. This permits Santhals to go in groups to the house of an offender and show their annoyance and dislike by shouting in threatening language and gestures and urinating near the house. It is an expression of annoyance rather than indulgence in any kind of violence. If our laws are applied in such a situation, which is the outcome of an innocent practice,

we may have to categorise these Santhals as rioters and members of an unlawful assembly etc.

These examples, which can be unending, go to show that law enforcement agencies should use the utmost discretion. There is a case for incorporating appropriate provisions in the various criminal and other laws to provide for exceptions and the use of discretion by police officers. Absence of such provisions has led to unpredictable reactions from individual police officers, leaving the tribals guessing and confused — not to mention their discomfiture.

Tribal people are an economically weaker section of the community. Basing their needs on those of other rural and urban populations would be misleading. For example, loss of a small amount of rice or mohua flour or a chicken, the total value of which may not exceed two or three rupees, may be a serious economic hardship to a tribal. So, if the police refuse to investigate cases of this kind, it would be an act of great injustice, apart from shattering the confidence of the people in the whole system. One has reason to believe that this attitude has contributed to the reduction in the number of cases reported over the years in traditional tribal pockets.

**I**n tribal areas, contentment based on a way of life which is quite different from the rest of the society, governs their over-all attitude. Thus, a person may cultivate only what is required for his family. For most of the year, he may be satisfied to live on some forest produce or the other, which may not at all figure in our list of daily needs. In such an environment, things which we consider totally insignificant and trivial in monetary terms, may mean a great deal of him. This is a very important factor which one must keep in mind in dealing with tribal problems. But what is most disturbing is that very often the police do not seem to be alive to this aspect.

In addition, tribal people are subjected to other influences which affect their interests adversely. These could be broadly categorised as (a) exploitation by 'middlemen', the trader, the forest contractor and the

liquor vendor, (b) exploitation and domination by 'clever and unscrupulous groups' and (c) pressure from 'religious groups'. To my mind it is in these areas that the police can and should render yeoman service. It is here that changes in the legal system and law enforcement should take place.

**M**any of the tribal areas are endowed with very rich natural resources and produce agricultural items which are much sought after by the rest of the community. Taking advantage of their inherent poverty and ignorance, unscrupulous middlemen exploit the people. Even the efforts of the government to help them get a good price for their produce have not always been successful because of the undue influence of middlemen. The police will have to carve out an appropriate role for themselves in this and should take all legal steps to safeguard the interests of the tribals.

In most of the tribal areas, the land belongs to them and there are legal provisions which debar transfers. But, thanks to the innocence and style of life of the tribal peoples, unscrupulous groups dispossess them of their land. It is important that the police should try and prevent this happening and also assist in recovering possession of land already taken away. Special legislation has been enacted for this purpose in some States. There is a growing realisation that these important reforms can be implemented only with effective and direct police involvement.

The other adverse influence (which is often in the nature of direct pressure) comes from religious groups. In exchange for providing local medical and educational facilities, many tribal people have been forcibly converted to other religions. Even though laws exist against such activities, the problem keeps coming up and the police have to afford protection.

It is clear that the requirements of policing a tribal area are distinct. If one makes a study of the type of requests and complaints made to the police, this will be quite clear. Requests for police intervention are not necessarily in terms of offences in



the Indian Penal Code. They touch upon areas of counselling, conflict management and exploitation. Therefore, in order that policing be realistic, we have to redefine the role and enact appropriate laws to cater to special tribal needs. No doubt, the structure and organisation of the police in such areas will have to be radically changed. This applies equally to legal enactments. After all, do we not have different personal laws for even advanced groups like the Muslims, Parsis, Jains etc

Our policy regarding personnel posted to tribal areas will also have to change. There is hardly any attempt to orient a person to the problems and the cultural and social environment of the tribals before being posted there. Instead of trying to speak their dialect or language, we expect the tribals to converse with us in our own language. In the process, valuable information is lost. To that extent our ability to serve the tribals is also impaired. Should we not make it compulsory for policemen posted to tribal areas to know their language and dialect? Should we not encourage and take positive steps to involve more and more the tribals in the policing of their areas? Is it not possible to establish a formal relationship between the police agency and the tribal social organisations like their panchayats?

Even as these problems may be examined and solutions found, the police have to realise their special responsibility to the tribals. There are many areas where police have to take the individual without waiting for the tribals to come to them. Matters relating to bonded labour, harassment by money lenders, unauthorised occupation of the tribals' land by exploiters and the increasing involvement of the tribals by non-tribals in illicit liquor business etc will fall under this category. These are areas where non-tribals take undue advantage of the innocence and the economic condition of the tribals. There are yet other areas, as mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs, involving issues of conflict between our laws and accepted social and cultural norms of the tribals. In these areas more formal efforts will have to be made and police have to be given the authority legally

# Working conditions

GOURI SEN

THE appointment of the National Police Commission under the chairmanship of Dharma Vira is an important landmark in the history of the Indian police. Though far-reaching changes have occurred in the country after the enactment of the Police Act of 1861, and particularly during the last 30 years of Independence, there had been no comprehensive review at the national level of the police system after independence. The structure and organisation devised by the British more than a century ago have remained fixed and frozen. The Indian police, in its present shape, was reorganised when a police commission was appointed in 1860 to study exhaustively the police requirements of the country. The result of the commission's deliberations was the Police Act of 1861 which entrusted the work of policing in the country to a civil constabulary headed by an Inspector-General of Police in every State and a Superintendent of Police in every district.

Because of the demands and requirements of the situation prevailing in our country after the Sepoy Mutiny (1857), the Indian Police was trained and equipped on the lines of the Indian army and was considered more or less a garrison force as the British could not afford to support a large standing army to control the countryside. The uniform and the weaponry of the police were patterned after the infantry. The result was that the police remained alienated from the public who looked upon it



as the long arm of the administration that came to punish rather than befriend the people.

In 1902 Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy of India, set up another police commission to make a searching enquiry into the working of the Indian police. The Commission roundly denounced inefficiency, rampant corruption and high-handedness prevailing in the force, but endorsed the organisational principles established by the Police Act of 1861. This had laid down that the administration of the police had to be vested in the Inspector-General of Police at the provincial level and the Supdt of Police at the district level. The Supdt of Police was to hold his charge under the 'general control and direction' of the District Magistrate. The exact import of the phrase 'general control and direction' has time and again been the subject matter of prolonged controversy, but in practice it has meant the relegation of the S P. to an inferior and subordinate position.

The police manuals framed in various provinces went a step further and gave powers to the District Magistrate far in excess of what was perhaps envisaged in the Police Act and the subordination of the S P. to the D M was carried much further than what the Commission and the legislature had contemplated. From the point of view of the police officer, there thus exist two hierarchies of supervising authorities — the police hierarchy with the Inspector General at the top and the civilian hierarchy running from the D.M. to the Secretary of the Home Department.

**A**t present, the Inspector-General of Police has been reduced to a mere head of the force with no direct responsibility or operational control. His role has become advisory, and the extent to which his advice is accepted depends upon his equation with the Government. H N Sarkar, who was I G P in West Bengal for nearly 10 years, stated in disgust that he was merely responsible for the shine of the leather and the polish of the brass. The National Police Commission has to examine and comment on the desirability of the control of the civil bureaucracy over the police and to see if a parallel can be found in any other democratic country of

the world. In Great Britain, the Metropolitan Police does not function under the Magistracy.

It is expected that the Commission will examine and find out if under this arrangement for dual control for over a century, the police administration has improved in any direction — in prevention and elimination of corruption in police ranks or in fostering better understanding with the public. Many senior officers feel strongly that non-professional interference in day-to-day police work must go, and the police, while remaining subject to political control and direction at higher level, should be delinked from the civil bureaucratic control. This will give the police an opportunity to make a fresh effort to improve their equation with the public. At present in a number of big cities of the country there are commissionerates with the police commissioner at the top, vested with magisterial powers. Crime and law and order, it has been found, are handled with more efficiency in those cities than in districts which still continue to remain under the old system.

**M**any police commissions in the past (which were all on a State basis) just avoided consideration of fair and equitable pay scales for the lower ranks of the police. Financial constraint is not perhaps the sole cause behind this exclusion. There has been a feeling that the police being a disciplined force, will not resort to agitational methods like industrial workers, bankmen and other categories of government servants. But this smug feeling received a jolt when police agitations in different States burst out with fury and suddenness in May and June, 1979. The agitation which first started in the Punjab soon got out of hand and spread to neighbouring States. Though the agitation has been grandiosely described as the Second Sepoy Mutiny, the Chairman of the National Police Commission, Dharma Vira, was right when he said that this police agitation was a rebellion only in technical terms. The agitation had its genesis in various genuine, pent-up and long unattended grievances of the police and highlighted the fact that there was a

strong case for examining the whole gamut of grievances of the police, particularly at lower levels.

**T**hough its terms of reference do not include provision of pay scales for the police, the National Police Commission, in its interim report submitted in February, 1979, made a forceful plea for improving the working conditions of the police constables who constitute nearly 80% of the police force in the country. The constables, who are poorly paid even by Indian standards, constitute as William H. Parker (an American police expert) once described, the 'Achilles heel' of the Indian police. The hours of duties of the constables are long and irregular (a study carried out by the National Productivity Council showed that the policemen had to work upto 16 hours a day, seven days a week), recuperation time during which he can regain his mental balance is short and the facilities for healthy recreation are almost non-existent.

The National Police Commission in its interim report has observed that the constable of the present day has moved far from the predominantly mechanical role assigned to him by the 1902 police commission and has to interact with the public in large numbers in a variety of situations where he has to apply his mind, exercise his judgement and enforce law with public understanding and cooperation. It is the constabulary who form the cutting edge of the police administration and face the public most during their visits to the police stations and movement on the road. The National Police Commission has found, from a sample survey of the actual work currently done by the constables in a few police stations, that 49% of their time is spent on duties which require initiative, exercise of discretion and judgement and also inter-action with the public, 37% of the time is spent on duties which are of similar nature, though they do not involve inter-action with the public, and only 14% of their duties are mechanical in nature.

The promotional structure in the present police system does not permit fulfilment of the career ambitions of the overwhelming majority of the



constables It has been found that in Bihar only 12% of the constables were able to get promotion to the next higher rank of head constables and in Madras the ratio of those who got upward promotion from the rank of constables were 1 in 20 in the unarmed police and 1 in 14 in the armed police Because of the extremely limited opportunities for promotion and advancement in the service, the constables become frustrated and develop an inferiority complex which they betray in their day-to-day dealings with the public The Commission has suggested that the promotional structure within the police system should be so radically revised as to permit a smooth and quick promotional flow from the rank of the constables The Commission has commended the British practice of the policemen being paid a little more than a skilled industrial worker to compensate him for the hazards and it has recommended wider adoption of West Bengal's scheme of subsidised rations of essential commodities for police personnel

**T**he housing conditions of the police, particularly at the lower level, are also deplorable The problem has now assumed formidable dimensions in many States In Bihar, which has about 49,000 Head Constables/Constables the family accommodation has been provided to only 4% of them In the Punjab, it is only 10.3% of the Constables who have got family accommodation and in U P it is just 14.9% The position in many other northern States is no better

The Commission feels that 'from the point of view of improving police efficiency and sustaining the sagging morale of the force, the problem of housing of the constabulary should be given first priority in financial allocations and the pace of investment has to be substantially accelerated' But even after the agitations very little has been done in many States to improve the housing conditions of the police

The question of permitting the policemen to form associations for collective bargaining is to be faced once and for all It is not desirable to deny this basic democratic right to policemen when every other trade and profession can exercise it Trade

unionism is unthinkable in the police, and as M S Gore, a member of the Police Commission and Director of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences has put it, 'It is immoral on the part of any uniformed class to go on strike For the police force which has open access to arms, this can be dangerous' But an early warning system of discontent, an essential safety device, is necessary. Many advanced countries have provided for in-built organisations for the redressal of grievances of the police Since 1953, Britain has a police council patterned after the Whitley Council The police council consists of officials and staff under an independent chairman and it is this body which negotiates agreements on wages and service conditions of personnel There is even a provision for arbitration

**I**n India, Bihar and West Bengal have recognised police unions The National Police Commission in its interim report has recommended the formation of Police Associations for the 'collective articulation' of grievances and suggested some guidelines to be kept in view by the prescribed authorities before granting recognition to police associations The guidelines are

(a) Membership shall be restricted to serving policemen only No outsider or government servant shall be entitled to membership or function as office-bearers of the association

(b) The members shall not have the right to strike

(c) The association shall not resort to any coercive method of agitation for obtaining redressal of their grievances

(d) The association shall not do anything which may affect the efficiency of the force and may undermine its discipline

(e) The association shall be absolutely non-political in character and shall not be directly or indirectly connected with political activities of any kind The Commission has also recommended formation of joint consultative council in the shape of staff councils for the police personnel at the district level and State level to provide forums for involving con-

crete and practicable solutions of the various problems

In this connection, it will be good to bear in mind that more than half the policemen in service today were recruited after 1960. Many of them are educated and expect to be treated better and are not prepared to accept the handicaps of the police service One senior and respected officer has very perceptively observed 'If we continue to think in terms of old feudal models, we will be encouraging clandestine activities of a dangerous type We will throw the way open to subversive agencies and they are bound to be explosions of the Delhi and U P type again and again' It is always good to provide channels for the ventilation of grievances, otherwise the bottled up frustrations will erupt in a violent way

In this connection it is also necessary to point to the other side of the medal After police agitations, many States have now recognised the right of policemen to form associations But in certain States it has been noticed that some elements in the force are unfortunately misusing this right and indulging in indisciplined activities It is hoped that these are only temporary and transient aberrations

**F**or the improvement of law enforcement throughout the country, another much-needed requirement will be to strengthen and revitalise the civil police. There is urgent need for assessing scientifically the manpower requirements of police stations for effective policing of the vast stretches of rural areas and increasing the police population ratio In India, in 1960 the ratio of unarmed police to the population was 1 constable for 1459 persons as against the ratio of 1 constable for 600 persons in Japan and 1 constable for 562 persons in France In Great Britain the Royal Commission has upheld the view that the proportion of one policeman per 539 persons is adequate

In India, since 1962, there has been considerable expansion of the armed police Para-military organisations like the B S F, C R P, R P F, C I S F etc, have proliferated while strengthening of the civil police has



remained neglected. This has been a distorted development. After all, crime cannot be checked through the armed police. For this purpose, more police stations and out-posts with adequate transport and communication facilities as well as better trained and less over-burdened staff are required.

**B**ut what do we see in reality? The average jurisdiction of a police station is about 200 sq. miles covering 100 villages with a population of about 75,000 persons. Needless to say, the charge becomes unmanageable; there are too many cases (as pointed out by the Law Commission in its 14th Report) to be investigated by the available staff. In this connection, it is worth while to recall the recommendations of the conference of I G Ps. held in 1958. According to this, the normal beat of a police station should be 75 sq. miles with a population between 50,000 to 60,000. There should be one S.I., 1 A S I or Head Constable for every 60 registered Cog. cases. For every 60 additional cases, or fraction thereof, one additional S I should be provided. Where the area or the population of the police station exceeds the limits laid down above, one additional S.I. should be provided for other duties. If on this basis the police station has more than three S Is, the police station should be bifurcated. There should be one constable for each investigating officer, 3 for station watch duty, one A S I /Head Constable for writer's duty. For village visiting, there should be 10 constables in a police station covering an area of 75 sq. miles and population of 50,000. As regards each circle, it should normally include not more than 4-5 police stations.

One of the Committees of the Inspector General of Police (1962) had further suggested that if the strength of the district police force exceeds 1500, the management of the force should be entrusted to an Addl. S P. Similarly, if the incidence of Cog. crime in a district exceeds 3,000 a year, another Addl. S P. should be posted for proper supervision. These recommendations of the I G P. have been fully endorsed by the Working Group of the Administrative Reforms Commission on

Police Administration (1967). The recommendations regarding the delimitations of jurisdictions of rural police stations and the strength of the staff have also been endorsed by the U P. Police Commission.

Senior police officers in the field know how difficult it is to get sanction of funds for augmentation of the P S staff, improvement of police buildings and expansion of other essential facilities for police work. Because of the present-day emphasis on development administration, the regulatory administration has apparently remained neglected, standing frozen as it were, in the time-frame of the colonial regime. And the basic fact is forgotten that the progress of a country depends on peaceful existence of law and order and no country can 'afford to neglect the needs of the machinery and personnel responsible for the maintenance of law and order except at considerable peril to orderly progress'. The stinging observation of the Police Commission of 1902 is valid even in today's context. The police department, which so intimately concerns the life of the people has hitherto been starved ... and it is worthwhile to pay for them the price required.'

**A**ny discussion about today's police problems will remain incomplete unless a more fundamental question regarding the law-enforcement in the country is faced. Law and order is a State subject. The violent and disturbing incidents taking place in different parts of the country are increasingly showing the incapacity of different State governments to enforce laws firmly and evenly. According to the Constitution, every citizen is entitled to the equal protection of law and this can be assured to him if the law is applied uniformly, but this uniform application of law, as events show, is not possible if different States are allowed to administer laws according to their own likes, capacities and resources. The Central government must shoulder the responsibility of ensuring uniformity in the standards of law and order and in the methods to be employed for their maintenance throughout the country. This can be done only when law and order are brought on the concurrent list.



# Community participation

P D SHARMA

THE functions of policing are so basic and fundamental that community participation in police work can neither be taken for granted nor can it be left to the choice or discretion of certain sections of society which ultimately represent the latter. Actually, all police work, whether in the field of conventional crime or vice or in the field of maintenance of law and order, is undertaken by the government of the day for the very preservation of the community against the activities of certain individuals or sections who live and operate in its parameters.

In a plural and discord-ridden society like India, the concept of community is not nebulous but obviously self-contradictory. Caste, region, religion, elite groups and class interests render the community life non-communal in the sense of homogeneity and cohesiveness generated by common awareness of common interests. Consequently, to seek or expect community participation in a developing society is putting the cart before the horse.

In the relatively more homogeneous societies of the west, the community (notwithstanding its discords) offers its cooperation and participation in police work because a citizen

police is only an extension of community work. The community participates because the 'police organisation' is communitarian and the policeman somehow continues to be an outsider. Functionally, he represents a 'power mechanism' which is more likely to be abused than non-used. The police organisation does not participate in law making and has little choice in implementing the laws handed down to it by the political masters.

Community participation in police work or police participation in community life in all civilised societies, developing or developed, is essentially a situation dependent upon two major variables obtained at a given period of history in a particular society. They are (i) the ideological values of the political system, which the rulers of the country profess or prefer to practise in relation to the bulk of the citizenry and (ii) the operating socio cultural norms, which tend to condition the bureaucratic ethos of the administrative structures and more so in a developing society.

Indian society and the Indian police organisation in the past were remarkably congruent in their value systems and notwithstanding the



major aberrations, the police organisation was functionally acceptable to the citizens, who by and large shared the mass values of injustice, corruption, servitude, apathy and all mighty divine rulers. The Moghuls created a feudal police structure for the continuance of a feudal society in India. The British, though well acquainted with the notion of a citizen police at home, designed and drafted the model of a colonial police to maintain imperial law and order, against which the nationalist leaders created a consensus of violation and disregard. After independence the Indian society has all of a sudden been radically exposed to scientific and humanitarian values of mass authority, individual liberty, justice to weaker sections and egalitarianism, demanding equitable distribution of developmental spoils. This has given to the lay citizen a new set of political values which is not in tune with the social values, resisting change that fast.

**T**he Indian police organisation, which was conceived in its present form in 1861 and then remodelled in 1902, has remained a spectator, a sufferer and even a persecutor of this society, which has passed through all sorts of travails and abortive transformations during the twentieth century. The British model of police could keep the colonial government going by keeping the community at a distance. After independence India has not endeavoured to evolve a citizen police organisation, although all kinds of citizens have been told that the police is no longer running a colony and exists to preserve, protect and defend their life, liberty and property. The hiatus causes imbalance and the role of the police vis-a-vis other segments of society including civil, military, district, central and development administrations leaves the community as well as the police bewildered.

The job of policing compels the police organisation to confront several basic problems vis-a-vis the citizen or the community. For instance, in all societies there exists a microscopic minority of delinquent, perverted, violent, insane and criminal citizens, who prefer to operate outside the bounds of law and in-

dulge in harassing, exploiting and torturing the bulk of society by their individual or gang activities. The police has to identify, investigate, prosecute and bring these offenders or criminals to book. Moreover, this job of liquidation of crime and criminals entails preventive measures, which again initiates a very sensitive process of filterisation, confrontation and detection at the police level. As a crime prevention agency the usual charges levelled by the community against the police are that, (i) The police is inefficient, inadequate and ill-trained for the job entrusted to it by the community, (ii) it employs third degree methods and is barbarous in its professional behaviour with the citizens, (iii) it is corrupt and shares the booty with the criminals whom it seeks to detect and arrest.

The police officials on the other hand place the onus for this foul image of theirs on the political organisation and social system of the country and the administrative procedures which they have evolved over the centuries. By and large they do not blame the community, but maintain that (i) Citizens in general have a tendency to abate and condone crime rather than to fight against it. (ii) Citizens are increasingly developing a sense of fearlessness from the authorities of the government and have simultaneously failed to inculcate a discipline of law abidingness. (iii) The citizens have somehow developed a civic culture in which their frustrations make them feel that everybody in a developing society is a criminal and that it is a matter of sheer chance or manipulation as to who is administering the law and who happens to be the victim.

**T**hese dilemmas of the community and the policeman are founded on each other's perception of a relationship which is constantly in a state of flux. From crime prevention when one comes to the area of law and order maintenance the problem acquires political dimensions. The primary police function of law and order maintenance in a society emanates from the state of political stability and the basic respect for the fundamental rights of the citizens guaranteed by the Constitution. Here the problem is that political rulers

deal with their political masters, i.e., the citizens through various agencies like the press, political parties, bureaucracy, and other voluntary organisations. The police stands as a buffer in between and acts as a custodian of law and order, which is defined by the political rulers and sometimes not accepted by the political masters, i.e., people or their leaders. The consequent disorder, violence and disrespect for law leaves little option for the police to choose between the two, but to accept the interpretation of the rulers of the civilians and execute their orders even ruthlessly. This inevitably leads to a number of dilemmas for the policeman as well as for the community both of whom may not be deeply involved in playing the game.

**T**he police job in a developing society has inherent functional dilemmas and inhibitions for the policeman and the citizen in their participation in both the areas of crime prevention and order maintenance. The police cannot afford to ignore the average citizen. Like several other areas of civil administration the sphere of its activities is not merely segmental. Whether the policeman likes it or not, the citizen has his opinion about his job performance and continues to maintain a relationship during all times, even when it results from a casual situational contact.

The criminals naturally do not like even the most honest of the policeman. The victims of crime feel that the tragedy could have been averted if the police would have been vigilant. The weaker sections of the society tend to think that the police is an arm of that government, which is perhaps responsible for their trade unionist and the student activities. The communal trouble shooters in an over democratic political system are liable to believe that the police is a defender of the 'status quo' and is a 'tool of repression' in the hands of a 'ruling elite' which they want to replace. When their licentious activities are curbed they again blame the police and condemn them. Hence whether the system is 'open' or 'closed' the police cannot happen to be a friend of the citizen, unless the basic 'police philosophy' is changed and the



police organisation and police procedures of work are restructured with missionary like faith in this philosophy of citizen police.

Studies in the police image demonstrate that a majority of the citizens, at least in India, organise or perceive their relationship with the police not on the basis of their personal experience or involvement but from the glib notions which are passed on to them through the agents of social change, like the press, the cinema, the text-books and the political parties. Although all citizens see and feel the presence of policeman in uniform around them, they seldom realise that majority of the policemen are the people with whom they scarcely have any face to face relationship or interactions as citizens.

In India more than half of the police strength belongs to the armed police or such Union agencies like Border Security Force, Central Reserve Police, Industrial Security Force etc. Any contact of the lay citizen with these policemen is merely situational or only when something unfortunate has happened. This functionally unfortunate relationship prejudices the citizens image, dealings and relationship with the police organisation and he tends to look at his Station House Officer as a natural successor of the police officer, using batons or 'lathies' on an irate crowd. Not only this, the citizen has little or perhaps no idea of the extremely useful and dangerous work, which hundreds of police officials in the intelligence branch, Modus Operandi Bureau, and Criminal Investigation Department have been doing to mitigate the risks of insecurity to his person and family. The good work cannot be publicised again because of functional constraints and the citizens remain unappreciative because of its confidential nature. Then in the Indian situation, when there is a lot of vicarious pleasure-seeking in exaggerating police misdeeds, the rational ethos seldom rewards the family of the policeman which loses its breadwinner in chasing a smuggler.

conditioned by the following factors —

(i) The historical legacies and the image of the police for which very little has been done to explain and rewrite things on a clean slate for the new generation.

(ii) The police procedures of work which have remained archaic, out-dated and rooted in distrust of the policeman as well as that of the citizen.

(iii) The structure and functioning of the democratic institutions in the country which in their enthusiasm for political development and modernisation have created a situation of over-strain for the Indian police and have simultaneously kept the police organisation stagnant in their genuine fear of fighting disruption and social chaos in the future.

(iv) Absolute ignorance of the citizens about the challenges of the police profession and callous indifference of the intelligentsia in educating the citizenry to view the policeman as a friend.

(v) The paramilitary character of police leadership which has viewed its own organisation as a mere power machine to be pressed into service quite efficiently, rather than to be employed as a 'service agency' for the weak and the needy for succour.

It is true that the police and community, both, have failed to live up to the concept of the relationship which unfortunately was never established between the two in Indian history. Let it be understood that a cordial police community relationship is something unprecedented and has to be attempted and continuously strived for in India. This relationship before it is established and developed has to be spelt out conceptually. It cannot be a relationship of the health administration with patients of an epidemic, nor can it be akin to the relationship of the defence service to the citizens of India. Theoretically speaking if one analyses the nature of the police profession and the various sections of the community involved in various ways in police work at different levels of police adminis-

tration one can visualise three dimensions of this new and yet to be born relationship:—

(i) The police has to inculcate extreme repugnance to the criminal variety of citizens and has to deal with them with absolute firmness.

(ii) The police has to be extremely friendly, guardian like and affectionate to all those who happen to be the victims of crime and criminals in society.

(iii) The police has to have good cordiality, civility to all kinds of political leaders with thousands and thousands of average citizens from whom the above two varieties are to be sorted out with extreme caution and expertise.

(iv) The police should maintain a respectful neutrality to all kinds of political leaders without giving an impression of being partisan towards the present or future rulers.

It is easier said than done, yet it has to be done with a mission and with the courage of conviction needed to push it through. No society can legislate this relationship, but all societies can conventionally evolve it in the context of their social norms and cultural values. The neglect of this invites violence and corruption which further results in the aggravation of crime and incidence of lawlessness in society. The vicious circle cannot divorce the society just because of its value in compatibilities, nor can it be allowed to transgress limits just because people deserve it. The onus of initiating and courting good relationship with the community has to be on the police and the arguments that the police is already over-worked or that the police will be further exposed to popular vilification or that the police budgets or available expertise do not permit this, are simply untenable because without this the police has to handle work which it creates. Police image per se may be immaterial, but the ultimate cost which the community or the nation has to pay in terms of erosion of faith in democratic institutions is not only tremendous but simply incalculable.

The dynamics of this relationship is much more fundamental than the

To my mind the community relationship in the Indian context is



mere fact of its availability. The specific objectives of police community relationship in a democratic administration of a welfare State hardly need any reiteration. The unwilling partners cherish an interest based relationship, but suffer from the inhibitions of mutual prejudices and colossal ignorance about each others predicaments in a joint venture. The situational factors are adding to the strain and by the time the adjustment comes the further deteriorating situation starts demanding still more concessions for mutual accommodation.

Here comes the role of the non-police or other governmental or community organisations to study the external factors and let the police and the community know what bedevils their relationship. How is it going to effect adversely if (as partners in the game) they get their vision blurred and indulge in mutual recriminations? Enough has been written about the role of the opinion leaders of society in building a fund of goodwill between the police officials and the man in the street, press, radio, T.V., primary schools, cinema, exhibitions, courtesy weeks, etc., have their own impact and role in the world of mass communication and popular education.

**B**ut what is more important is the attempt to initiate a break-through in police culture. This culture is an end-product of professional socialisation and takes a heavy toll of creativity and enthusiasm of hundreds of brilliant young officers of the Indian police, who feel like having committed professional suicide after a decade of struggle in the profession. The studies in police research and recommendations of all police commissions and police seminars stress upon this neglected aspect of police community relationship, which is generally lost in an unanimous endorsement of publicity techniques. No body denies that publicity euphoria can work wonders, but the real and lasting relationships come only through suffering the painful realisation of hard facts, revealed through honest heart searching. The institutional charges render situations conducive to this kind of introspection. In one of the police seminars on police community relationship a task

force of senior IPS officers recommended the following measures for the growth of a more purposeful police community relationship conducive to meaningful community participation in police work —

(i) Police should be declared a public service under section 23 of the Police Act, 1861

(ii) Crimes reported to the police station should be registered and response time be cut down to the minimum.

(iii) Courtesy combined with firmness should be the watch-word of police behaviour at the police station level.

(iv) Police stations should wear a neat and clean look. If the small police stations cannot afford a reception room, they should be able to offer at least a seat and glass of water to the visitors.

(v) Non-cognisable offences against human body defined under section 323, 504, 506, 507, 508 and 510 of the Indian Penal Code should be made cognisable to impart human dignity orientations to the Code

(vi) Investigating officers should not be below the rank of Assistant Sub-Inspectors. They should eschew third degree methods and behave like civilian policemen using modus operandi and fingerprint system as a way of life for police investigation.

(vii) Unenforceable legislation like the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act, gambling and prohibition laws etc should be scrapped off the statute book

(viii) Circle Inspector should be vested with the powers of probation officers under the Probation of Offenders Act.

(ix) Police should be associated with the working of panchayati raj institutions in rural areas. Rural home guards and civilian rifle training programmes should be activated.

(x) School text books should contain lessons on police work. Police achievements should be highlighted by mass media and full length and documentary films should be screened to project various facts of life in the police profession.

The above-mentioned suggestions not only represent an exercise in self-

searching but indicate some concrete and workable steps by which confidence can be infused and built up in a relationship which has to be essentially a relationship of mutual affection, bilateral trust and popular service to the community. In projecting this relationship the police organisation has to go more than half way and its senior officials have to display courage, vision and capacity to take short range risks for the attainment of long term ends.

The citizen has to disorient himself, but this is what has to be attempted by the institutions of primary and secondary socialisation in the community. The police has to wait and suffer quite patiently till this disorientation of the members of the community becomes visible. But then simultaneously it has to launch a programme of reorienting the bulk of the community and its opinion leaders. This has to be backed with a genuine desire and demonstrable efforts to revamp its own house and put it in order. The citizen is not only to be assured but convinced that it is a 'New Police' and not just the old police in new uniform. To accomplish this the Indian police has to identify itself with the changing concepts of law and order in developing societies. To become acceptable to the community it has to be recognised as a 'limb of law' which in turn will imply a 'mind orientation' of the police organisation.

**F**rom 'muscle to mind' is a long road but the police administration in India will have to traverse it, if it wants to be lovable and functional for the millions and millions of citizens of a democratic country. The dilemmas and inhibitions inbuilt in the process of generating healthy and enlightened community participation in police work are genuine and historical. Passing the buck will not solve the problem. Preparing the community for meaningful participation in police work will naturally take more time. Let the police organisation initiate measures to resolve and remove some of these uncalled for dilemmas and inhibitions which render community participation in police work unsatisfactory and self-defeating in the present context of social change and community building in India.



# Books

**INTRODUCTION TO CRIMINAL JUSTICE** by  
Joseph J Seena and Larry J Siegel West Pub-  
lishing Company, Minnesota

THE not unjustifiable belief that crime all over the world is on the increase has invested the study of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) with a lot of respectability. It is no longer an area which is of interest solely to the criminologists, sociologists or police administrators. The common man is also becoming increasingly interested in (or exposed to) the complexities of CJS because crime stares at him at every turn and twist. Hence any addition to the library on this subject is most welcome.

Senna and Siegel successfully avoid cliches and raise many valid issues. Interestingly, when the Indian police is under fire from all quarters, one finds that there are many problems which it faces that are relevant to its counterpart in the U.S.A. as well.

It is now fairly well recognised that the police in India are an overburdened lot. This impression is equally true of courts and correctional bodies, a fact

which confounds an observer of the American scene as well. Senna and Siegel have no definite solution, although in passing they would refer to the theory now broadly accepted that 'victimless crimes' (minor traffic offenders, stubborn children and drink addicts) should not be the responsibility of the CJS but of other social service agencies. This concept may not find ready acceptance in our country where we look up to governmental authority for even our routine chores and where civic pride is almost non-existent. We may still ponder this suggestion and find how best to extend it to the Indian scene. A small beginning can be made in metropolitan cities where voluntary agencies have done work of note. Any step in this direction would be highly welcome to the average Indian cop.

The authors rightly identify the critical issue as 'the need to balance the individual rights of offenders with effective law enforcement. Too much due process of law can hamper crime control efforts, while arbitrary police and correctional practices can infringe on human and constitutional rights'. A significant observation which can provide hours and hours of worthy debate. The Indian police, particularly in recent years, have been bitter about the unwarranted





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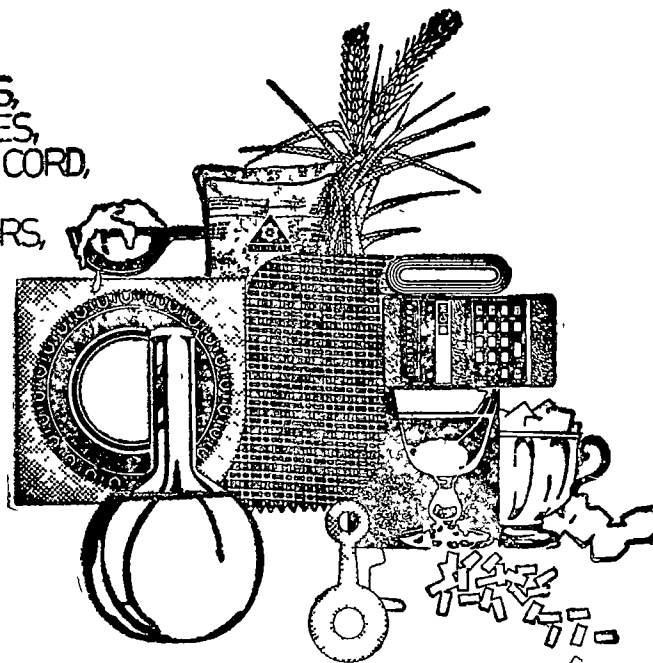
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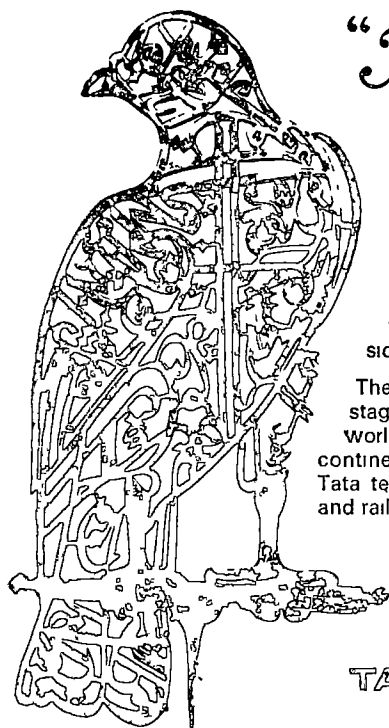


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The wheel has turned full circle. After a brief period of colonial stagnation, India has once again become a producer for the whole world. In this Tata has played a pioneering role on all five continents with Tata steel going to America, Tata trucks to Europe, Tata textiles and radios to Africa, tubes and press tools to Australia and rails and railway equipment to Asian countries like Burma.

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restraints which slow down investigation, particularly of offences that are committed by groups which profess the extremist ideology and take to banditry of a kind that does not yield itself to lawful methods of tackling.

Most importantly, the Indian police have been scorned for increased high-handedness in dealing with the average citizen. The need to bridge the gulf between the two has been the favourite theme of every police officer who mounts the public platform. How does one go about it? The police in every State have innovated a great deal. Has this had any impact? One would like to answer in the affirmative. But dispassionate observers react differently. There is cold comfort in that in the U S A also, Police Community Relations (PCR) remains an embarrassment to the law enforcement agencies. 'The key to improving PCR may lie in improving the sensitivity and performance of every police officer and not in creating specialised PCR units. Some of the measures advocated include improving the education and training of the average patrol officer and detective, using promotional criteria to encourage sensitivity to citizens' needs and creating decentralised citizen-controlled police departments'.

The accent on heightened performance and better training methods is unexceptionable. Senna and Seigel may sound a little platitudinous but cannot be dismissed as impractical. Their suggestions provide the basis for efforts aimed at improving the police image and performance, particularly when we have made a definite beginning to lend a new look to the police. One need not be unduly cynical because of a few unfortunate episodes here and there which have not revealed the force in good light.

On the whole, a good effort by Senna and Seigel who have raised interesting issues of great relevance to all the three limbs of the CJS — the police, courts and correctional agencies. Students engaged in research would find this work much more than a mere text-book.

**R K Raghavan**

**FORCES OF ORDER—Police Behaviour in Japan and the United States by David H Bayley University of California Press, California**

DAVID H BAYLEY is a Professor of Political Science in the Graduate School of International Studies, University of Denver. He has done several studies on police organisations in various countries including India. He spent six months in Japan and the above mentioned work is the result of his observations during his study in that country.

The book is indeed a revelation even to the reader who has nothing to do with the police at all. At present public opinion is not very complementary about the police. So it comes as a surprise to read that the Japanese policeman is the most ideal man

ever in operation. He emerges as a humane being — which quality guides him in his task. One wonders if Bayley has not been over-generous in his compliment but he seems to have valid reasons for his conclusions.

The policeman in Japan realises that he is a member of a huge family and that his institution is part of a larger social fabric. He, therefore, knows that it is his duty not only to enforce the law but also to educate the citizens in their responsibilities towards the law and themselves. In this task he is helped both by his own organisation which gives him considerable latitude and backing as well as by the community itself. Offences are not always punished as strictly as would be expected for the motto is to make the offender realise his mistake and desist from future repetitions. Prosecutors and courts also imbibe this spirit so much so that the usual tension between the magistracy and the police found in the U S, India and other countries is not very evident in Japan.

Citizens also hold the force in respect and recognise that it is there for the good of society. Criminals accept their guilt voluntarily in many cases or at least readily. Their acceptance by society stems from the fact that police actions are based on an understanding of the emotional, cultural and organisational needs. The patrol men contribute a major share to this through their survey.

Their attitude to punishment also depends on the harm resultant from any criminal or unlawful activity. Thus prostitution, drinking, etc., are not considered grave violations, for the society itself feels that these do not in any way affect the basic fabric. However, when it comes to drug control, the police and the community act as one to bring the offenders to book. There is thus a healthy relationship between the police and the society which is very encouraging. The public actively help the police in their crime prevention duties by helping to educate members in the methods of combating crime and also to increase the awareness to the problem. When it fails to meet these responsibilities, external checks such as the Human Rights Bureau, Civilian Public safety commissions, the media and within the organisation itself, the prefectural legislatures, guide them. Politicians have no hand in either the organisation or functioning of the police force. They neither control the finances nor can they influence the postings. It is the bureaucracy that controls the institution.

One important aspect governing police functioning in Japan is the fact that all the men of the force act as one. Individual existence is not known and in whatever a policeman does, he is confident that he will be actively supported by his service. A system of cross check is instituted whereby the supervisory officer is punished for the mistakes of the juniors and so the junior thinks twice before he would embroil his senior.

Crime figures, number of arrests, prosecution, punishments, etc., are healthy compared to those in



the U.S. In the U.S. policemen make their presence felt and people are also very conscious of their liberties. So, it is not easy to make criminals accept their crimes. The American police system is also under the supervision of the politician and not of the public as in Japan. Political influence is not always impartial and hence the police come in for heavy criticism. Of course, in the U.S. there is a certain degree of social policing but it is mandatory unlike in Japan where it is voluntary. They have been given widely defined limits and they act within these parameters more as a defence against criticism. Although violence and the other defects in the community and the drawbacks of police functioning are blamed on the historical background, Bayley feels that history cannot be made to take the whole burden. In Japan until World War II, the police did not enjoy a very healthy reputation but today it is a living example of what is best in the force.

The solution would then be to adopt the Japanese system but the author warns that police practices are not interchangeable parts. It is necessary to study institutions in other countries for that would help in recognising the character of our own system and such a recognition is essential for planning the future.

The major lesson to be learnt from this book is that the job of the police today is not merely to maintain law and order but also recognise and voluntarily accept and discharge social responsibilities which arise out of, or outside the purview of, their duties. This would improve their image in the public eye and incidentally boost their morale too. For professional men, there are many interesting aspects such as training, mode of operations, hierarchical system, treatment of specific crimes, etc., which could be a valuable guide. The Police Commission could also benefit by the experiences of Bayley who has done a great service to the police by writing this book.

**Indu Malini**

**POLICING A PERPLEXED SOCIETY by Sir Robert Mark George, Allen and Unwin, 1977**

THE book 'Policing a Perplexed Society' is a collection of articles by Sir Robert Mark, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Force of London, dealing with various aspects and problems of police work in Great Britain. These papers also present a cogent and lucid exposition of his well thought out views on the changing role of the police in modern society. The police, according to the author, are the 'visible representation of the Government by consent' and provide a benign and reassuring influence in the perplexed society of today. Police work has awesome challenges and frustrations as the police provide the anvils on which the society beats out the problems of social inequality, racial inequality, racial prejudice and weak and ineffective legislation. In different chapters of the book, Sir Robert Mark has very perceptively analysed the problems of the police work in Great Britain as well as the shortcomings of the present cri-

iminal justice system, and suggested that there should be public discussion of these issues so that the police problems be seen in correct perspective and necessary changes and improvements brought about.

In the opening chapter of the book 'Corner-stones of Excellence' Sir Robert Mark refers to the inner strength of the British police, the extraordinary amount of public support it enjoys and explains how this support has been won by the police through its personal and collective integrity, long traditions of service and freedom from any kind of political interference in its operational role. Another striking thing about the British police is that they remain for the most part unarmed, though fire-arms are available to the specially trained groups in emergencies. For routine duties, the policemen themselves do not want to be armed as it would alienate them from the public.

In the chapter on 'Social Violence', the author has examined from different angles the problem of violent crimes which is on the increase in the affluent societies of the West and suggested that the problem has to be viewed in an objective manner and without the emotion that violence so often and so easily arouses. In England and Wales, known crimes of violence against the person (murder, manslaughter, infanticide etc.) have risen from 4800 in 1949 to 36,600 in 1969 and 62,800 in 1979. During the same period violent offences against property have risen from 92,000 to 4,93,000. And the real disturbing feature of the crime situation in U.K., Sir Robert Mark feels, is the significant increase in the selective crimes of violence, i.e., planned robbery and burglary directed against particular targets. This trend is worrying because the professional criminals are becoming aware of the limitations of the police and system of criminal justice and discovering that this form of crime can be highly rewarding. According to him, a professional robber or a burglar has a six out of ten chance of escaping arrest, and when he is caught, four out of ten chances of acquittal. The odds are more in his favour in U.S.A. The experienced professional criminals have thus reasons to believe that in the present system of trial and investigation, they have adequate chances to escape punishment altogether. The author justifiably repeats Lord Devlin's observation: 'If the success of a criminal prosecution is to be measured by the proportion of criminals whom it convicts and punishes, the English system must be regarded as a failure. Far too many people who have committed crimes have escaped punishment. When a criminal goes free, it is as much a failure of abstract justice as when an innocent man is convicted.'

In an illuminating chapter of the book captioned 'Minority Verdict' Sir Robert Mark has almost addressed the public over the head of the legal profession and expressed the critical police point of view on the working of the criminal justice system and said that their view point, the verdict of a minority, 'need not necessarily prevail, but it should be heard'. Sir Robert Mark aptly points out that in the criminal justice system the members of Parliament make laws,



the police enforce them, the lawyers run the trial and the prison and probation services deal with the convicted offenders

None of these groups is obliged to give any thought to the problems of the other or consider the working of the system as a whole. For example, the framers of the new laws very often give little attention to the problems of enforcement. As a result, once enacted some laws are dumped as unwanted babies in the back-door of the P Ss with little or no enquiry as to their eventual health. The public criticism of the ineffectiveness of these laws is directed against the police rather than towards the difficulties over which the police have no control.

In another interesting chapter 'Metropolitan Police and Political Demonstrations' the author deals with the problems which political demonstrations in London (which are held over all kinds of issues) pose for the Metropolitan Police and the manner in which the police perform their role, often risky and hazardous, by using minimal force. In their efforts to contain the mob, the policemen suffer and sustain physical injuries—the uniformed branch of 17,000 men of London suffer about 3,000 assaults every year and get in return from others a good deal of lip sympathy, and not much else. The author upholds the right of every group, professing even extremist or fascist philosophy, to organise demonstrations and proclaim its point of view provided it does not contravene the reasonable bounds set by law. But he strongly feels that law courts should deal more severely with misbehaviour and hooliganism during the political demonstrations and says that conduct that would provoke wide-spread condemnation in a football hooligan is, somehow, condoned in a political demonstrator.

The police in Great Britain, because of its long traditions of service to the community and general acceptability, have come to be regarded as the people's police. Charles Reith, author of 'Police Principles and Problems of War' goes to the extent of saying that the British police institution will be regarded by posterity as our 'greatest historical achievement and our most valuable contribution to civilisation'. But in India, the police still remains as an alienated force and looked down upon as a 'ruler-appointed police'. Though the problems of crime, violence and public reaction to the police in our country are different from Great Britain, and the police practices of the country which are rooted in the culture, social environment and history of that country cannot be transplanted easily in a foreign soil, the police administrators of India can imbibe some useful lessons by studying the working of the police in U.K. This book by Sir Robert Mark, written in a graceful style, and containing the views of an experienced and enlightened officer on the police problems and challenges, should be read not only by the police officers but also by enlightened citizens interested in the improvement of the law enforcement machinery and the criminal justice system.

S Sen

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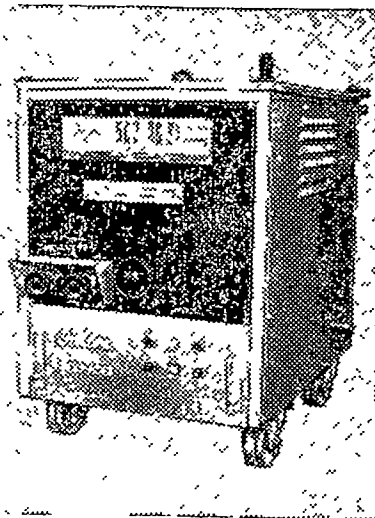


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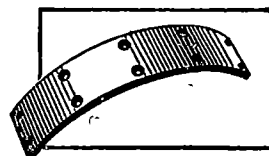


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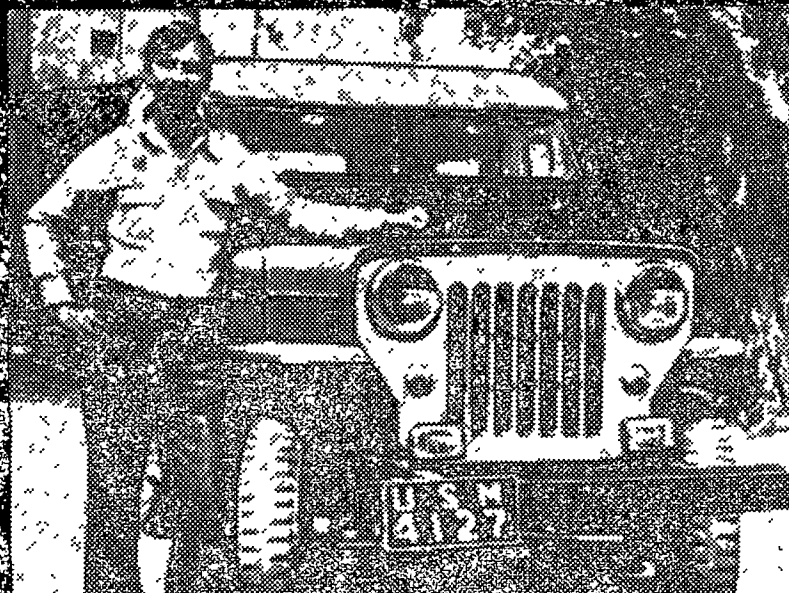
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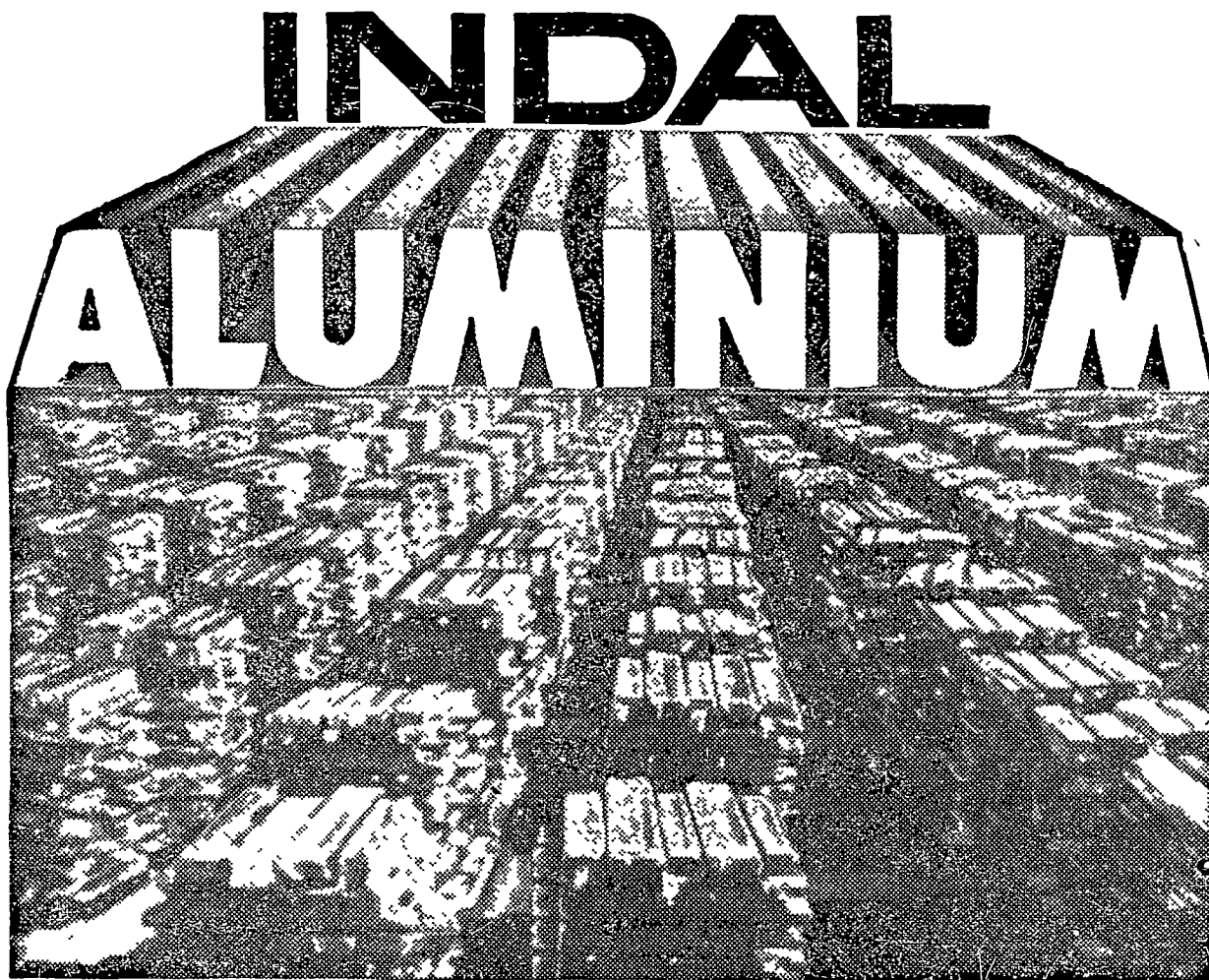
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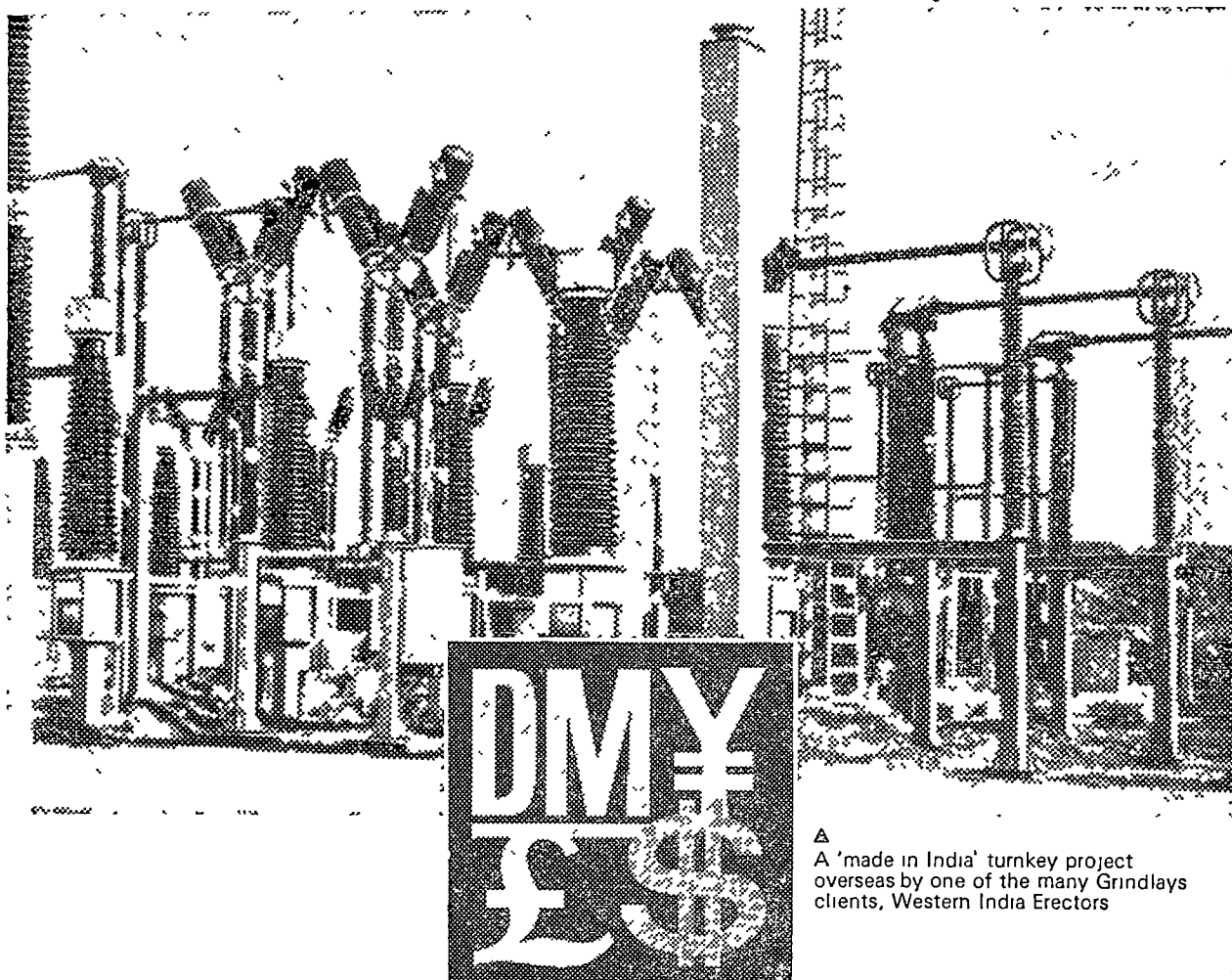
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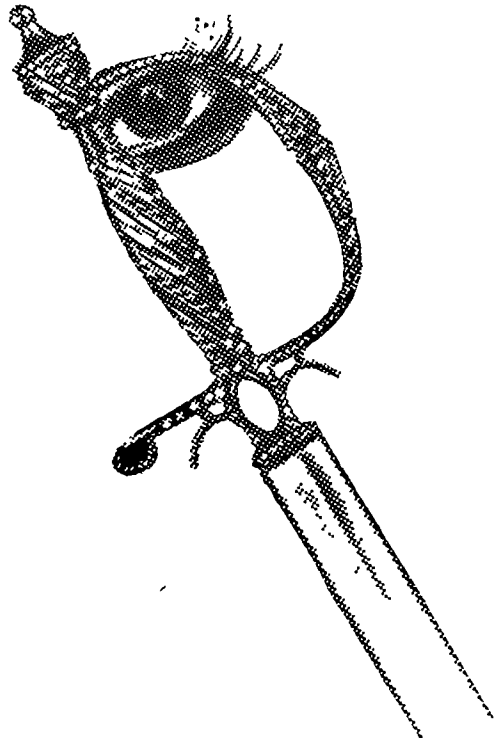


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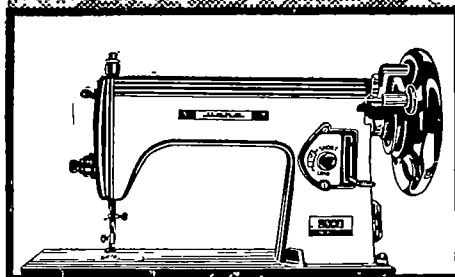
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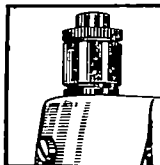
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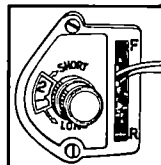
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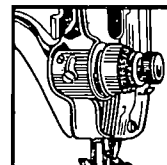
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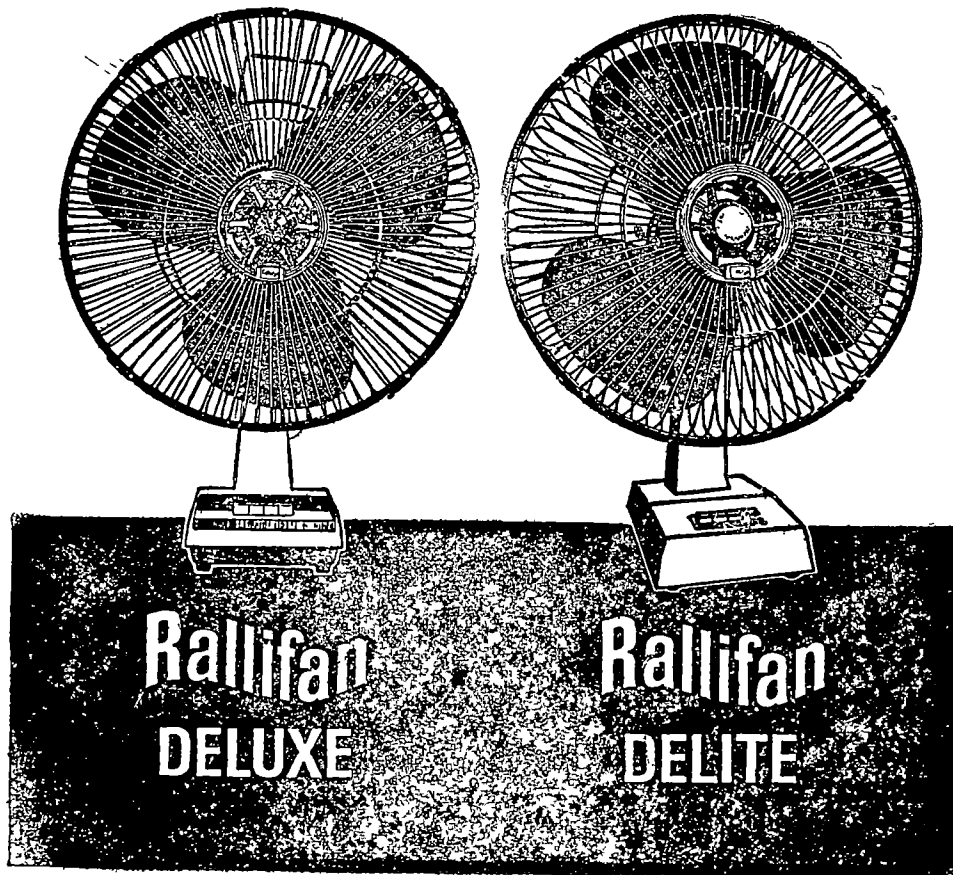
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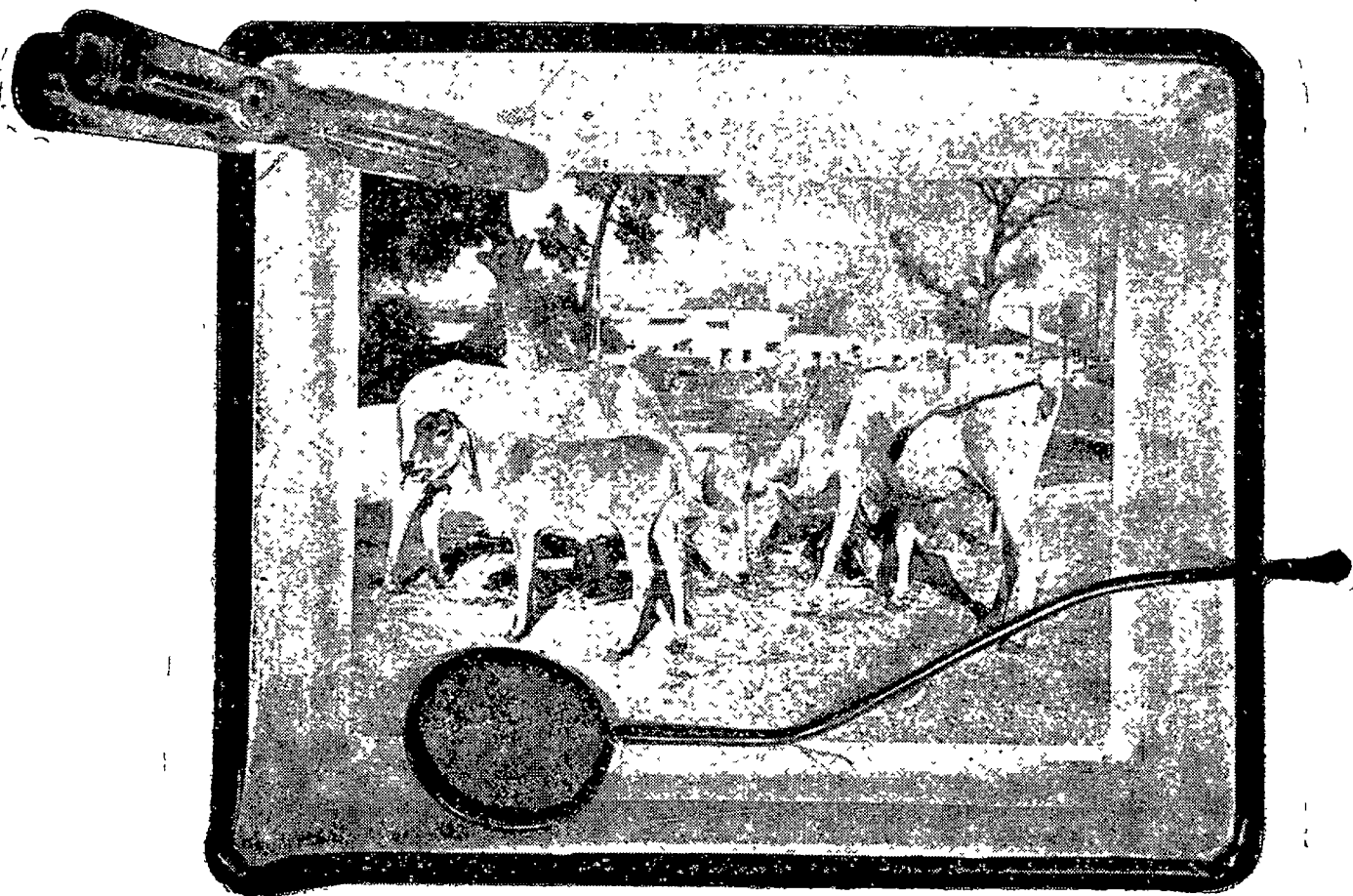
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Editor/ROMESH THAPAR

Managing Editor/RAJ THAPAR

Production/TEJBIR SINGH

Circulation/C B, KUL

Published from Malhotra Building, Janpath, New Delhi-1. Telephone 46534 Cable Address Seminar New Delhi Single copy: Rs. 85 cents; (\$). Yearly Rs. 30, £ 4, \$ 10 Three Year Rs. 75, £ 10, \$ 25. Reproduction of material prohibited unless permitted.

## **NEXT MONTH: WHITHER SOCIOLOGY**



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of the eighties

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Designed by Dilip Chowdhury Associates



# The problem

**IN the seventies, we seemed to have been in a desperate hurry to reach the end of the road, as it were, mauling every institution, every ethic that came in the way of the politicians' eager gallop for unbridled personal power. Behind us, the road lies littered with the remains of the frenzy — a non-performing system with maintenance at its lowest and harassment at its highest, a listless, demoralised civil service, a bewildered police, large numbers of our people still without drinking water although the satellite we have launched circles the earth, poverty increasing in aggregate terms as population mounts, and the terms that sustained us in our earlier years — socialism, secularism and democracy — so twisted and tattered by opportunist politicians that the original meaning has all but vanished.**

**This, of course, is the despairing side we live with. And in this we are not alone because politics all over the world seems to have come, through differing ways, to the same dead end with no choices among the familiar. But, there is yet another side beyond**



the end of the road, or away from it, giving us the greatest choice of all — the choice to change. We have today enough expertise and experience to alter structurally the systems we have given ourselves, to weed out the inconsistencies, to reform the electoral process, to rationalise our defence expenditure by intense diplomatic activity with our immediate neighbours, and to associate our people in the transformation. Our goal in the eighties is clear — to eliminate the below subsistence levels of living of forty per cent of our people. But to reach it, there must exist within the political framework men and women who can rise above motives of personal gain, out of the secure confines of their battered parties, and agree on priorities to wipe out poverty, the shame of our age. Economists say that this is within the grasp of the decade that is upon us, but the political will is absent. Can it be forged?

This issue of Seminar is an attempt to present some of the priorities, to clear the general direction for change and forward movement. For, the danger of being caught unawares is to crumble as everything crumbles around us.



# The second republic

B G VERGHESE

THE first Republic has been a long time a-dying. After the stroke it suffered during the Emergency there was an all too brief recovery in 1977 and then a relapse for much the same reasons: system-rot. There has been a preoccupation with personalities and 'saviours' and failure on the part of these men and women to summon the ability or the will to usher in a social and economic transformation. A fascination with the superficial and transient and with proximate causes, symptoms rather than the disease, has precluded understanding of the real nature and dimensions of the national crisis. New prescriptions have been of little avail, being unrelated to the underlying reality. Another decisive electoral verdict in three years amply proves that power is not related to programmes, nor programmes to structures that ensure performance and social justice.

'We are never completely contemporaneous with our present', Régis Debray wrote in *Revolution in the Revolution*. 'History advances in disguise, it appears on the stage wearing the mask of the preceding scene, and we tend to lose the meaning of the play. Each time the curtain rises, continuity has to be re-established. The blame, of course, is not history's, but lies in our vision, encumbered with memory and images learned in the past. We see the past superimposed on the present, even when the present is a revolution.'

When India made its 'tryst with destiny' in 1947, it had a choice regarding the path it would follow in fulfilling the aspirations of an independent people. The Congress opted for stability which meant adapting the status quo without upsetting the balance on which it rest-

ed. This might have been a prudent decision if only for a time. But it legitimised a framework of largely imitative institutions and the social inertia inherent in the system. In the immediate aftermath of partition and the accession of princely States, national integration quite properly assumed central importance. In this context continuity seemed to imply stability whereas the imperative of development was change. The contradiction was resolved in favour of stability encompassed within the 'steel frame' of paternalistic administrative structures and practices evolved in and for a very different milieu.

True, zamindari was abolished and planning was introduced with the public sector, controls and a measure of welfare becoming symbols of a new socialist(ic) society. The technological and infrastructural base was significantly expanded and is today a considerable asset. Nevertheless, vital social goals and national aspirations enshrined in the Preamble and Directive Principles of State Policy received but casual attention. Social justice and even employment were until recently seen as consequences rather than as instruments of development. The hope that the benefits of development would somehow trickle down or radiate outwards was belied. Thus, as government assumed more and more to itself, administrative expenditures soared and the country witnessed the paradox of a situation 'where wealth accumulates and men decay'. There was progress of course. Yet, unemployment, ill-health, illiteracy, slums and disparities widened. A grain 'surplus' did not relieve hunger and today an assessed 315 millions subsist on or below the bread-line.

The Constitution promised liberty with justice 'social, economic and



political', equality 'of status and opportunity'; and fraternity 'assuring the dignity of the individual'. Justice, liberty, equality and fraternity are available to a largely urban elite but not for the vast mass of the people. Unless this is seen to change, honestly and reasonably soon, liberty without bread will not long endure. Merely to talk of more rural development or cottage and small scale industry to redress the rural-urban balance or bridge the gap between large and small units of production will not do. Structural changes can no longer be avoided or postponed and without such reforms, development will not achieve exponential growth nor ensure a more egalitarian society with the ability to deliver more quality to the lives of the underprivileged and ordinary people.

Departure from dead habit and the long established status quo will encounter social outrage and appeals to traditional and religious sanctity. It will be challenged by vested interests. Change involves transitional pains and adjustments to new relationships and may be expected to invite strong opposition that seemingly threatens the dreadful prospect of a breakdown of law and order. However, it is important to discard the ruling elite's concept of 'law and order' which sees the role of law and law enforcement essentially as one of preserving the established order rather than help bring in change.

This ingrained attitude derives from an educational system that rests on false values, is unrelated to the realities of Indian life and the environment, is not geared to the skills required to transform the country and, by failing to mediate the modernisation process, has bred alienation and the phenomenon of the educated or semi-educated unemployed.

The broad consensus fashioned under Nehru held India together and gave direction to its efforts during the first and perhaps second decade after Independence. This consisted of a commitment to a liberal society based on parliamentary democracy within a federally oriented 'union of States', secularism, socialism, planned development, science and technology, modernisation and non-alignment. The States were reorganised, along

linguistic lines and the three-language formula was evolved in the interests of national unity. The Congress Party, abjuring Gandhi's advice that it convert itself into a *lok sevak sangh* on completing its mission of ending foreign rule, remained a platform, an umbrella organisation functioning increasingly as an election machine that brought together ideologically divergent groups in changing combinations for purposes of sharing power. The faction rather than the party soon emerged as the basic unit of the Indian polity and changing factional loyalties was the precursor to the phenomenon of defections and the rise of *Aya Rams* and *Gaya Rams*.

The fact that the Congress, indeed Nehru, ruled at the Centre and the States resulted in the Constitution not being fully operationalised and tested in the early years. Many basic decisions were taken and conflicts resolved informally within the Congress family. Consequently, constitutional conventions were late in developing, several Articles remained in disuse, and the Constitution itself came under strain with the breakdown of the Nehruvian consensus and the decline of the Congress.

The tradition of what Gunnar Myrdal called the soft State was established and 'democracy' increasingly came to mean ritual talk with little action or accountability, an emphasis on rights without any equivalent insistence on duties or responsibilities. The population problem was not properly perceived, despite early lip service to family planning, and it is only now being gradually recognised that high fertility is the consequence as much as the cause of poverty. The forced sterilisation of the 'undeserving poor', including beggars, during the Emergency was the final, desperate alibi and escape for a system that had reached a dead-end. The implications of Kerala's declining fertility curve are yet to be widely understood.

Emphasis was placed on material more than on human development. The constitutional promise of universal education by 1960 and of ending reservations for scheduled castes and tribes by 1965 (in the belief that equal opportunity would have been

established by then) remained a dead letter. Higher education was given precedence over universal elementary education and literacy, and the rigidities of the formal structure of education became a barrier to learning. Degrees by whatever manner became to jobs what the P-form was to foreign travel.

Agrarian reform was consciously arrested or remained on paper with the result that the benefits of the green revolution were largely garnered by large and medium farmers with access to irrigation, credits, inputs and services while smaller peasants were marginalised or squeezed off the land and not always given their due as agricultural labourers. Tribal lands were alienated and forest contractors developed their own 'zamindari'. With the availability of cheaper and newer manufactures, traditional rural artisans and craftsmen were pauperised and joined the stream of migrants swelling inadvertent cities.

The South East Resource Region comprising a population of 43 million within the DVC and Mahanadi basins and Dandakaranya accounts for some 90 per cent of the country's steel and coal production and is otherwise well endowed with forest and mineral wealth. As much as one half of the total central industrial sector outlay was invested in this single region during the first four Plans. Yet a survey by the Joint Planning Team of the Town & Country Planning Organisation in 1976 showed that per capita incomes here were half the national average while much of the agriculture was barely above subsistence level. The Report ruefully concluded that development had been confined to five enclaves comprising 12 cities including Bhilai, Durgapur, Sindri and Rourkela and that so much 'nation-building' activity had failed to promote regional and local development.

Health precedes medicine. Yet hospital-based medicine was given first priority. The highly skewed health delivery system simply does not reach down to the millions. Tentative efforts at reform by seeking to introduce community health services at the rural base through simply trained



community health volunteers aided by mobile teams and referral services have met with strong resistance from the medical establishment

The legal system has likewise failed to deliver justice to the poor and needy. Justice is dilatory and expansive and those who have the means often go to court to circumvent the law. Automatic writs and injunctions that sometimes take years to vacate, and mounting arrears—over 600,000 cases in the High Courts alone—have become major problems. The system has been enmeshed in a procedural jungle. Unless justice becomes more of a fact and less of a hope, its credibility, especially at lower levels, must remain seriously impaired.

Unemployment has mounted as population increase has outpaced development. The labour-intensity of Indian agriculture remains relatively low and organised industry employs no more than 20 million persons in both the public and private sectors. Some five million (net) are added to the labour force each year—a formidable challenge. In this situation some trade unions seem more intent on protecting existing employment and in feather-bedding than in promoting new employment opportunities. Production and productivity have become dirty words and the endeavour is often to get more for less. The current concept of bonus is unrelated to any kind of work ethic or productivity norms. Resistance to competition has encouraged monopoly, high-cost production, shortages and indifferent quality.

The public sector was supposed to capture the commanding heights of the economy, operate as a counter-vailing power and give an impetus to improved technology and innovative management. This hope has been but fitfully realised. The public sector has not been given a chance and has developed its own bureaucracy which, like the civil service, enjoys sundry perks and life-time security without any corresponding commitment to performance. The further hope that the public sector would generate increasing surpluses for development and thereby relieve the burden of taxation has proved a chimera.

Indian science and technology has not been given clearly defined goals and priorities except to a limited degree. In the result, effort and outlays have been diffused and like certain other aspects of planning, have not been fitted into a relevant systems framework.

Various assumptions were belied or overtaken by events. The concept of community development assumed the existence of a homogenous community whereas the reality of rural India in particular is rigid stratification to a high degree. There has likewise been a tendency to leave what are clearly and optimally collective tasks to individual effort. Watershed management, sanitation, pest control and land use planning are some examples. Development and social action has been balkanised and the reinforcing effect of linked systems has been lost. Thus bonded labour, untouchability and dowry continue despite repeated 'abolition'. Taking the village as the basic unit of development has been another naive assumption. The autonomous and self-sufficient 'village republic' belongs to the distant past. Modern technological developments and managerial and marketing compulsions dictate the logic of larger clusters on the lines of the mandal panchayat described in the Asoka Mehta Report on Panchayati Raj.

The role of women in nation-building, modernisation and development was for long obscured.

The concept of an undiluted private sector remains especially with regard to 'monopoly' houses, despite the fact that most worthwhile firms have steadily become joint enterprises, with increasing investments through the LIC, UTI and other public financial institutions, and operate within a regimen of licensing and controls. Moreover, the managing agency system has been ended and professional managements have begun to replace family management. Correspondingly, the status of the worker and student has been miscast as autonomous entities. A worker works not merely for himself and for an employer but for other workers and for society. Even as a worker, he is a citizen, a consumer, and a house-

holder. Sabotage of water mains or power lines by striking employees (both recent examples) is impermissible. Students likewise are privileged citizens and can claim no special rights or permanent interests (as individuals) when they constitute a transient category.

National integration and development have been pursued without an adequate understanding of the need for and importance of democratic and genuinely mass communications to inform and motivate people and mediate change. Our mass media are largely urban class media.

There has been a tendency to ignore social accounting in calculating individual or private costs and benefits and a failure to draw a sharper distinction between private and social consumption in budgetary and Plan outlays, town planning, housing, transportation and the like. Maintenance has been a major casualty over the years. Government policies or predilections have been confused with the national interest and official secrecy and national security have, as elsewhere, become a cover for decisions and actions that may not bear close scrutiny.

Non-alignment, despite its admitted virtues, has been reduced to a *mantra*, often representing the lowest common factor within a pressure bloc.

False and dangerous rural-urban, agricultural-industrial, big-small, and appropriate-advanced technology dichotomies have been portrayed and pushed. Khadi, a strategy or means of development and social change, has been reduced to a subsidised product, an end in itself.

India's diversity and manifold stages of development preclude simple and rigid either/or formulations. There are varying shades of gray as well as an inherent dynamic that should be a warning against ideological straitjackets or neat compartments. For the same reason, there may seldom be universal validity in uniform national policies. The more relevant yardstick would be universal values and principles.

Another unspoken assumption has been that the State is called upon to



do and regulate everything, duty-bound as it is to socialism and welfare. This could result in the anaemic and inefficient 'post-office socialism' that has been gently ridiculed, or in paternalism or State capitalism. Individual and community initiative should not be choked. We have ceilings (prohibitions) but no floors that would prescribe minimum performance as a basic civic or social responsibility.

Language policy, despite its importance and sensitivity, has been reduced to the language used for official notings on files rather than as a vehicle for comprehension and communication in the vibrant spoken language of the people. There is no real national language policy at all, no drive for script simplification and standardisation given the good fortune of a largely common alphabet, no development of basic vocabularies and of national signs and symbols, few translations, little effort to develop and propagate standard keyboards and cheap dubbing equipment, no widespread development of simultaneous interpretation facilities and little training of multilingual interpreters. Article 351 says that Hindi shall be an inclusive language taking in words and phrases from Hindustani and the other Indian languages, apart from Sanskrit. This has been virtually ignored. Instead, deliberate efforts have been made to create an exclusive language. The failure of language policy is not confined to Hindi alone. It extends to all Indian languages. Language teaching has been sadly neglected and book production, with romanisation as an aid, has not received the encouragement it deserves.

**D**isenchantment with the failure of the system to deliver has been evident since the late 1950s. Rather than attend to the problem, a dual society has been encouraged to grow and put down new roots. Corruption — from simple speed-money and 'dastur' to licensed black marketing, profiteering, adulteration, nepotism, influence-peddling, tax evasion, smuggling, circumventing of rules and laws, and other forms of racketeering and 'fixing' — has assumed alarming proportions. Political exactions and contributions, especially for purposes of electoral funding, have become a

major generator of black money, with a high multiplier. Political donations buy their own protection. Altogether this has created a parallel economy and, sometimes, almost a parallel government. Corruption at the top has produced disgust, scorn, defiance, shirk-work attitudes, indiscipline, cheating and violence in other and less privileged strata of society. Moral authority has weakened.

**T**he administration has declined. The bureaucracy has been interfered with and sought to be politicised in the absence of political cadres. District and field training have been devalued and the great prizes are seen to lie in the secretariats, preferably in Delhi. Files still travel slowly and futilely up and down and round about without any visible improvement in the quality of decision-making. Part of the circumlocution is intended to play safe and secure more signatures. There is little accountability, as security is an absolute value. Correspondingly, merit is not always or easily rewarded. Mediocrity and safety are the rule. The departmentalisation of administration is convenient but not necessarily functional. Modern government, and development certainly, is interdisciplinary and many decisions, essential linkages, and logistical support fall within the interstices of inter-departmental jurisdiction, resulting in rivalry or neglect. Task forces are required.

States and even districts and blocks have not been considered from the point of view of optimal units of management and development. They are largely historical accidents. The myth of one language, one-State (outside the Hindi belt) is an unfortunate legacy of the reorganisation of States. The factor of population growth has been ignored. Thus, several Indian districts are country-size in area and population while States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh are vast and unmanageable. With the country's population likely to swell to 950 million by 2000 A.D., geographically and administratively more homogeneous States of 10 to 30 million population size would make for better political and administrative

management. The reorganisation of the country into 30 or 50 States must however be done on techno-economic and administrative rather than on narrowly historical and 'cultural' considerations. Smaller units could then be regrouped in larger functional agglomerations through zonal councils (such as the North-Eastern Council), transport and resource zones, river basins and watersheds, electricity grids, and so on. There could be common Governors, High Courts, public service commissions and administrative cadres.

Similarly, there is need to decentralise development and governance to and through more compact and viable districts down to mandal panchayats and municipal corporations or metropolitan regions. The country could do with maybe 800 to 1000 districts in place of the present 400, and up to 10,000 — 15,000 blocks in place of the present 5000. These numbers should be adjudged in terms of a prospective stable population of around 1000 million. Micro-planning, participation, comprehension and accountability call for smaller units. All cities of one million and above should enjoy a special administrative status and a new urban-rural nexus should be sought to be forged around them through policies of constructive and culturally enriching interdependence. Urban government cries out for radical overhaul.

The slow growth of an inflexible and widespread administrative and industrial caste system has not gone entirely unnoticed, but must be amended if not ended. Excessive job classification has resulted in overmanning and feather bedding while the creation of an hierarchy of administrative cadres enjoying a superior status to the technical and professional branches has bred ill-will and inefficiency. A single administrative cadre with co-equal administrative and technical branches with room at the top for merit must be seriously considered.

**A**ll this suggests structural changes. The first two decades were spent in a pattern of development that sharpened the contours of a dual society of 'we' and 'they'. The



third decade of Independence saw some movement towards a government for the people. What is now required is a decisive thrust towards a government of and by the people who can no longer be treated as mere objects of development but must become equal partners and participants fixing their own priorities and perhaps even writing their own programmes.

An awareness that this must be done will help define national goals and a new national consensus which will in turn dictate priorities and strategies.

**D**emocracy and discipline are not incompatible. Firm government is possible given the moral authority that derives from integrity and purpose sanctioned by the will of the people as established through democratic procedures. Given this, much else follows. Secularism is no longer an independent variable in India-1979 but a facet of democracy. In the 1830s 'secularism' was linked to the rights of and equal citizenship for Muslims in particular and other minorities generally against the backlash of majority sentiment in the aftermath of Partition and the terrible communal riots and refugee movements attending them. The Kashmir dispute, the military threat from Pakistan and a continuous migration across the border created a climate of suspicion amongst a section of emotionally bruised people against Muslims whose ultimate loyalty as a community was wrongly suspect. Secularism implied fighting against such hysteria, promoting communal harmony and combating discrimination on grounds of religion. The concept was therefore linked to issues of national security and national integration. The Muslim Indian suffered a loss of identity in the trauma of Partition and was forced or retreated into isolationism.

By the latter 1960s and 1970s the situation had changed. The 1965 war at first and the 1971 war and birth of Bangladesh more decisively marked the end of the Pakistan-Kashmir syndrome. The Muslim Indian was politically integrated but remains economically backward and socially conservative because the

community has by and large failed to emerge from a self-made ghetto, modernise and compete. The task of secularism is now to help the Muslim Indian to abandon the backwoods and participate vigorously in the economic and social mainstream. Poverty and limited opportunity, an economy of shortages, breeds discrimination by stronger groups against weaker categories. Political instability militates against the bold decisions and structural changes so necessary to develop economic momentum. Every weakening of the democratic process encourages parochialism, casteism and communalism and tendencies on the part of particular kinship or regional groups to grab whatever they can. Democracy and development and the social change they foster provide the real content of secularism today. The RSS 'threat' is in this sense a residual phenomenon which can be expected to fade away or be isolated. If blown up into a bogey it could usurp the stage and put back Indian secularism by a decade.

**G**overnment of the people means participation, not paternalism, and a strong movement away from a highly elitist towards a more egalitarian society. This has to be reflected in priorities and in the will to implement agrarian reform, fashion a water policy, reorganise the distribution of resources and patterns of consumption, provide access to development to the millions thus far denied it, press forward with human development and an equal status for women, reorient values through educational reform, and generate mass employment that could convert labour into capital. Hard, far-sighted decisions need to be taken about land use and cropping patterns, environmental care, choices of technology, location of industry, spatial planning, and the growth of settlements. These are inter-related matters and cannot properly be dealt with in isolation.

The Harijan and tribal masses can no more be exploited. They have become politically and socially conscious and are beginning to assert themselves. The Harijan atrocities periodically reported are indicative of the changed mood and a transition from passive acceptance of their lot by oppressed and disadvantaged

groups to organisation, resistance and struggle. This is a positive development and in a sense corresponds to the transition in the attitudes of American blacks during the 1950s and 1960s.

**I**f the democratic system is to survive, the purity of the electoral process must be safeguarded. India has adopted the British model. But the two-party, constituency party system does not apply. Even 'representation of the people' seems remote given vast parliamentary constituencies. The cost of elections has become an engine of political corruption and poses an immediate problem. Defections have become endemic and betray the principle of representation on the basis of a (party) mandate. There is a wide measure of agreement on reducing costs and improving electoral procedures so as to ensure that the polls are fair and free. State funding of electoral and even party expenses is gaining acceptance within certain parameters, subject to the parties themselves practising internal democracy and subjecting their accounts to public audit.

Certain other reforms in the parliamentary system seem worthy of serious consideration. Introduction of a partial list system for the Lok Sabha would reduce costs and produce greater stability and coherence. It would certainly improve the quality of representation. The directly elected representative should belong to the constituency. The danger of the lists being dictated by a party caucus could be mitigated or overcome by seeking to develop a parallel system of voters' councils which could, in time, undertake the kind of screening that the primaries ensure in the United States. The alternative is to subject party slates to endorsement in some form by electoral colleges composed of State, zila parishad and municipal legislators. With a larger House, more parliamentary work could usefully be done in committees which should be empowered to take evidence. Decisions could require Parliament's endorsement.

Finally, the Rajya Sabha should (with a further reorganisation of States as proposed), become a genuine Council of States with a distinct



role in securing federal consensus, reviewing policies, and providing a wider spectrum of representation to special interests than is possible today through the 12 member nominated list

The Vice-President and Governors too must be more than ornamental or partisan figures holding sinecures and could become responsible for monitoring certain safeguards and programmes

Foreign policy and defence could usefully be brought under a national security and foreign relations council which would be in a position to take a broader and somewhat more independent view of the threat and measures to counter it, than the individual departments concerned. India's foreign policy and foreign economic policy for instance have for a whole generation ignored the vital importance of its international rivers, which are prized but shared natural resources. The bulk of the country's Himalayan headwaters are in Nepal, Bhutan and China. The vital significance of river and ocean transit to the security, integration and development of the north-eastern region has again never been seen as a key foreign policy issue. New opportunities of regional cooperation are emerging which call for developing viable complementarities through plan programmes. These, rather than a stereotyped nonalignment must be the stuff of foreign policy which will gain credibility with political stability, economic advancement and regional coherence

**L**ife styles must change so that simplicity and sharing replace ostentatious consumption and waste. There is no escape from evolving a viable incomes and wages policy related to a public distribution system that provides basic necessities and other wage goods at reasonable prices. It is necessary to level down as much as level up. The present concept of bonus needs to be replaced by a more rational system that enables workers to a share in gains from rising labour productivity. Some of this could be distributed in workers' equity that would also forge a link between workers' participation in management with workers' ownership. Labour and trade union laws

need to be overhauled so as to mitigate if not preclude inter-union rivalry and outside leadership and provide for secret ballot in establishing majority membership for the collective bargaining agent. Conciliation and adjudication procedures need to be expeditious and go-slows, strikes and lock-outs measures of last resort. Strikes in essential services should be barred. Given fair labour practices and a credible wage-incentive system it may not be impossible to negotiate an industrial truce. Strong unions are necessary. Responsible unionism is no less important. The potential of what the communists call moral as opposed to material incentives also needs to be explored

**P**ricing policies should be reviewed so as to eliminate hidden subsidies and to relate products and services to their true costs. Exceptions must be rigorously justified and limited to specific periods of time. A stable tax policy is overdue. Constant changes in the very basis of taxation and not just in tax rates causes uncertainty and administrative confusion. An agricultural holdings tax is also justified in view of the substantial opportunities arising for income generation in this sector with new technology and related infrastructure being made available by government.

Core investments have stagnated for several years and it is time the economy took a leap forward. Simultaneously, the minimum needs programme and wage goods production must be pushed. A coal-hydel, alcohol, bio-mass based energy policy, public transport and mass transit, and public housing emerge as clear priorities. The channelisation of private savings into low-budget housing with mortgage finance would fulfil national need and provide dispersed employment. Housing is not just consumption or welfare. It is a minimum need and a productive investment and could be operated as a development trigger. A national sanitation programme (water supply, drainage, latrines, and recycling of wastes) must also form part of the minimum needs package. Together with the abolition of scavenging, this is a social imperative for ending untouchability, promoting health and creating wealth from waste

Jobs should be delinked from degree and selections for employment made on the basis of functional qualifications and objective tests. Higher education should be priced up so that it is not as heavily subsidised as at present. Merit scholarships and stipends should however be available for deserving and outstanding students. For the rest, vocational training and 'shallow' courses oriented to priority manpower needs that are constantly reviewed would be appropriate, with wide opportunities for people to upgrade their knowledge and skills through correspondence or university-of-the-air and similar informal/external, part-time courses. AIR's farm-school-on-the-air offers another promising base on which to build through community/local radio and TV.

**T**he object of policy should be to provide within five to ten years a minimum guarantee to every family of employment, food, fuel, clothing, shelter, education, health care, and basic social insurance cover, including old age and disability benefits. Success here would provide a powerful incentive to family planning. A Children's Charter was suggested a decade back and as soon forgotten. Even a modest incremental investment in the child will be a significant investment in the future. An imaginative national conscription service scheme — not necessarily linked to the educational process — would be an appropriate quid pro quo and should be attempted. Article 23(2) provides for this. The minimum needs programme and land and water conservation, including soil conservation and social forestry could absorb millions of man-years for the next decade or two.

Among the early national values advocated after Independence was the establishment of a cooperative commonwealth. This was soon forgotten and superseded by the socialist ideal as cooperation was discredited as a result of bogus membership and overdues, its politicisation in some areas, and its destruction in others by unwisely insisting on the disbandment of viable, large sized societies in favour of weak and leaderless one-village-one-society units (as in UP). Neither individualism and



the materialism that goes with it nor collectivisation is suited to India. The via media lies in community action, trusteeship and cooperation which needs to be interpreted, structured and promoted anew. This would appear more likely to succeed given a more decentralised administration and micro-planning which must be regarded as vital components of a new order.

The basic elements of structural change around which a new national consensus can be built are inherent in the compulsions of the situation as well as in the Constitution and recent party manifestoes.

**A** broad enumeration would include the following:

1. Reaffirmation of a democratic polity based on a Gandhian ethic of participation through decentralisation and economic democracy founded on the values of egalitarianism, human rights, social justice, and the value (as distinct from present programme) of Antyodaya. The formula must be 'both bread and liberty'.

2. A mixed economy should continue to be promoted. Public control is now far more relevant and critical than public ownership. In any event, public ownership beyond a certain point must result in over-centralisation of (State) power which is as undesirable as unbridled capitalism or laissez-faire. The public sector should be in a position to influence but not to dictate absolutely. Conversely, a healthy private sector could provide a varied countervailing power which is a requisite to the cultivation of liberty and democracy.

3. A new and more positive interpretation of secularism that moves from the political to the now more relevant economic and social plane. Action here would involve universal education up to the age of 14, plus an adult (functional) literacy programme, leading up to a number of vocational streams that promote development and equality of opportunity. Scavenging must be outlawed not only to cut at the root of untouchability (*bhangu mukti*) but as part of a national sanitation-water borne latrine-health-human dignity programme that must be seen as another

minimum need. Reservations of all kinds (electoral and administrative) should be sought to be ended within a decade. This is a realistic target provided the related steps to universalise education and widen economic opportunity are firmly taken. A uniform civil code with the option for persons to opt in or opt out on attaining majority should also be debated and introduced within ten years, leaving individual communities to determine their own personal laws.

4. Agrarian reforms (ceilings, tenurial reform/rents/share-cropping, consolidation, minimum wages, homestead plots, bonded labour and indebtedness, tribal land alienation and forest rights, credit policy, intensive-extension, etc.), land and water conservation (including a national water policy, social and community forestry, environmental care as a basis for optimised land use, higher productivity per unit of land and water at higher levels of labour intensity), and a diversified agriculture (including animal husbandry, aquaculture and forestry). Updated records of rights and issuance of title deeds in passbooks should be completed within five years. Organisations of the rural poor are essential to underpin and deliver such a programme.

5. A Children's Charter: universal education, nutrition, immunisation, MCH, sports and physical fitness, outlets for creative and cultural pursuits, need-based and merit scholarships.

6. A Women's Charter: sexual equality, family laws, abolition of dowry through legal and social action including amendments to inheritance laws, MCH, right to work after marriage, access to family planning, and policies designed to ensure a steadily rising level of female participation and reduced domestic drudgery. The poor status of the Indian woman is an important reason for the country's economic and social backwardness.

7. The Right to Work: universal and adult education, community health care, and land and water conservation can with national conscription for certain categories and food-

for-work assistance be woven into a programme for mass employment, capital formation and economic opportunity. On-farm-development and forestry could provide countless million man-days of work for the next 10 to 15 years while young rural and urban women, especially between the ages of 16 and 21 or more could be mobilised in support of the education and health programme. Gainful occupation for young women would also greatly enhance the status of women by promoting economic independence and functional education and by reinforcing the possibility of a higher age of marriage and child bearing. Micro-planning could be developed as a basis for guaranteed employment together with a package for 'public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want' (Article 41).

8. While agriculture and the countryside must initially absorb the bulk of the new entrants to the labour force over the next 25 years, there must be rapid industrialisation and 'urbanisation'. India could become a major agricultural exporter and, illustratively, the Ganga basin alone could, with multiple cropping, feed the entire nation — a capability that suggests the need for bold yet careful crop and land use planning and water budgeting. Such an agricultural boom is postulated on agrarian reform and on-farm development and would indeed be impossible or explosive without it. Crop planning should shift from hunger (gram/calories) to health (oilseeds, pulses, fruit, vegetable, fodder, dairying, poultry and aquaculture) to provide the proteins and other nutritionally rich supplements required for a balanced diet. The area under forests, social forestry, plantations and grasslands must be enlarged to bring the proportion of forest to the total land area to 30 per cent (and 66 per cent in the hills) by the turn of the century. Catchment area authorities could be relevant instruments in this task.

9. A Minimum Needs programme which includes a Biological Minimum (nutrition, pure water and sanitation, shelter, health, family planning and immunisation), a Social Minimum, (human rights, sexual equality, secu-



larism/ abolition of caste, access to development, education and communication), an Economic Minimum (employment, minimum wages, social insurance, reasonable price stability for basic necessities and simple wage goods through suitable production programmes in the decentralised and small scale sector, and a wide public distribution network), and a Political Minimum (fair and free elections, speedy justice with legal aid, a Lok Pal and other machinery for dealing with charges of corruption, decentralisation through panchayat raj, reform of urban government, delinking jobs from degrees, and smaller States, districts and blocks). The right to shelter cannot be ignored. Public housing, least cost housing, sites and services, common facilities, public shelters and old age homes must be built into municipal and panchayat programmes. Would it be feasible to give every landless rural family a 5-10 cent homestead plot? 10 cents for 50 million households is five million acres or two million ha, a large but not impossible figure

10 A wages-incomes prices policy including subsidies and income distribution designed to ensure a range of disparities (after tax) not exceeding 1:20 in the first instance and 1:10 within 10 to 15 years. This will call for a view on taxation and pricing policies and on savings (as against ostentatious consumption), minimum wages, norms of minimum performance, productivity-sharing, workers' participation in ownership and management, betterment levies on unearned increment from capital appreciation, socialisation of land, and other related issues

11 Reform of trade union and industrial relations laws to avoid inter-union rivalries and outside leadership which is no longer necessary. There is need to address problems of trade union training and workers' education, conciliation and negotiating procedures, strikes in essential services, go-slows, hartals and bandhs, and sabotage. On the other hand, managements must abide by fair labour practices and fair trade practices, encourage processes and structures of industrial democracy, assist in workers' education and encourage vertical mobility.

12 Structural changes in the education and health systems. Part-time, informal and women's education need stress, and educational content must be related to national values and goals, the environment and relevant skill-formation. Distance learning and correspondence courses should be encouraged in place of more and more formal, sequential learning. Short courses need to be introduced and basic degree courses restructured. A licentiate medical course and a BSc health degree could (with paramedical cadres) cater to the needs of a basic health and medicare system with a wide outreach and delivery. The indigenous systems of medicine should be studied, researched and developed. Environmental sanitation and preventive health must be the base. The entire structure of medical education, research and administration calls for a close look.

13 The legal system needs simplification and widening at the base. Honorary magistrates and JPs can relieve regular cadres of routine responsibilities. At the higher levels the number of appeals could be regulated and injunctions given less liberally and for limited periods of 10 to 30 days within which they must be disposed of or lapse. The work load on judges and magistrates needs to be reduced so that cases are disposed of expeditiously without long adjournments. There must be a limitation on the number of cases a lawyer may simultaneously argue and on avoidably prolix arguments, citations and judgments. Nyaya panchayats are needed at the grassroots.

14 Electoral reforms must be geared to reducing costs, avoiding impersonation and ensuring fair and free polls. There is now wide agreement on State financing of recognised political parties for selected items of expenditure such as printing, transport and other facilities, with provision for public audit of the accounts of political parties. The electoral period, now 21 days, could be reduced to 17 or even 15 and use of vehicles effectively banned on the last day. Identity cards or signatures on counterfoils could prevent impersonation without impairing the secrecy of the ballot. The list system could also help contain ex-

penditure and make for fairer and better quality representation. The West German pattern, half direct and half list, with a minimum qualifying vote was proposed by President Zia in Pakistan and is the model envisaged in Sri Lanka. The danger of the lists being controlled by party caucuses may be obviated by subjecting them to democratic endorsement through some suitable means. Excepting the list system, the other reforms can be implemented by executive order on the basis of a political consensus. Identity cards were introduced in the Sikkim poll.

Reference has already been made to the need for reforming the Rajya Sabha as a more genuine Council of States. The Rajya Sabha enjoys the unused power (Article 294) by a two-thirds majority to empower Parliament to legislate on items in the State List for a period of one year at a time in the national interest. It could also be empowered to monitor the progress of certain social justice programmes flowing out of the Directive Principles.

15 With de facto public control and substantial public ownership of large firms there is no reason why they should not be permitted to expand and diversify on suitable terms in order to secure significant capacity expansions at low unit cost and benefit from economies of scale and proven management capabilities. TISCO has announced its intention to subject its operations to an independent social audit to establish how far the company has lived up to its social responsibilities. This is a welcome initiative and could become a basis for developing the concept of a national sector.

16 The obverse of this would be to experiment with regulated disinvestment in well run public sector corporations up to a limit of 24 per cent, shares being offered first to employees and thereafter to the general public. This could not only generate investible funds and provide a new outlet for savings but could introduce a new element into the management of these corporations and a wider sense of public accountability and participation. Gujarat Fertilisers is an example of a public corporation with private capi-



tal participation. Several hundreds of farmers are shareholders in the company Italy's IRI offers a foreign model. The public sector should also be scaled down to zila parishad, mandal panchayat and municipal level industries (and not just utilities). Orissa experimented with panchayat industries in the early 1960s and though this was abandoned after a time the concept is by no means discredited. Such mini-public sector corporations could be linked to local resources and local markets and could take on a service role in supplying or servicing the decentralised sector.

17. There is need for more emphasis on spatial and regional planning, choices of technology and location of industry, urban policy and settlement patterns, the development of growth centres, the rehabilitation of decaying old-city centres, the development of realistic utility housing standards and a review of rent and urban tenancy relations. A new rural-urban nexus that builds interdependence and mutual satisfaction must be consciously promoted. Every large urban centre must be administratively and economically integrated with the mandal panchayats around it.

18. Public housing and public transport, including mass transit facilities, must get priority over private consumption with its very high social overheads. Utility standards must be set with a guaranteed threshold of efficiency. Improved communications can replace physical movement up to a point and regional planning could obviate long, expensive, subsidised cross-transport hauls. Inland and coastal navigation could be resuscitated up to a point and national waterways must be demarcated (Article 257). Uneconomic railway lines must be closed except where there are strategic considerations. More immediately, transport priorities must be assigned rigorously so that wagons are available to move essential commodities.

19. The energy crisis calls for a national energy plan based on a rapid step up in coal production, the establishment of washeries to eliminate movement of huge quantities of non-volatile muck, accelerated hydro-electric generation which must

extend to joint projects with Nepal and Bhutan, the establishment of a national grid, and the development of alternative fuels such as bio-gas from recycled wastes and bio-mass, alcohols, and social forestry. Fuel efficiency, improved *Choolahs* and burners, the development of simple pressure cookers, and daylight saving are among other available options.

20. A more purposeful science and technology plan with specific R & D goals is essential. India's huge scientific and technical manpower is a tremendous asset which has simply not been put to optimum use. On the contrary, the absence of policy and direction has bred considerable frustration and resulted in brain drain. Many highly talented and experienced Indian scientists and technologists abroad are willing to come back and serve the country, given the opportunity and clearly defined tasks. Appropriate technology has in this context to be seen not as gadgets but as an attitude towards low cost, low skill technology as appropriate to situations where more sophisticated technology is too costly, out of scale, unnecessary, or not easily maintained or efficiently managed. India's technology spectrum must include the entire range of options and what is appropriate must be seen as a dynamic rather than a static concept. In many areas, the latest or most sophisticated technology is the most appropriate.

21. There should be a programme to operationalise the Directive Principles which represent the social conscience of the nation and the people's aspirations for a just society and a better quality of life. This can be done without violence to fundamental rights.

22. Administrative structures call for overhaul. Apart from smaller unit sizes of States, districts and blocks and more unified administrative cadres, people should be allowed to grow in their jobs, avoiding the present high turn-round of personnel, and there should be a premium on field experience. Some of the most senior and experienced officers should be in the field — where the action is — and not sitting behind remote secretariat desks. Task

forces, consisting of inter-departmental and inter-disciplinary groups, need to be set up to deal with specific problems. A greater interchange between government and the academic, business and professional worlds would be desirable and this could be made possible by encouraging a certain number of two-way contract appointments through lateral entry. There has also to be a devolution of responsibility so that papers do not needlessly travel up and down. Officers unwilling or unable to take decisions at given levels must be weeded out as unfit for the job. The generalist-specialist gap too has to be bridged and the myth that specialists cannot be administrators and that generalists can administer any specialist charge must be abandoned.

Simultaneously, the role of the police and its relations with the government and the public needs redefinition. Political and executive interference in the police has to end, and the law enforcement machinery has to become and be seen as an instrument for upholding the law and not presuming long established status quo. The recommendations of the National Police Commission will be awaited with interest in this regard.

23. Family planning is vitally important but must also be seen in the wider perspective of family welfare and population policy. Population growth is both the cause and the consequence of poverty and the role of development and egalitarianism in fertility control needs to be understood. Coercion of the kind witnessed during the Emergency is abhorrent. But social pressures and appropriate incentives and disincentives are not to be ruled out.

24. Voluntary and community action merits strong support.

25. India's foreign policy must rest on strong domestic foundations and on good neighbourly relations. Regional cooperation within the subcontinent and with West Asia, South East Asia and the Indian Ocean Community are also to be seen as desirable goals. The geo-political and cultural ties binding the nations of the subcontinent and the common rivers and oceans they share consti-



tute a basis for forging new relationships on terms of complete equality and mutual respect. In view of its enormous size, India must be generous and patient and willing to accommodate its smaller neighbours who might wish to band together to ensure a more balanced relationship. This should be no cause for alarm and should, if anything, be encouraged.

It would be useful to set up a national security council so that issues of foreign policy, foreign economic policy, defence, internal security and intelligence are coordinated and overseen within a wider frame. Bipartisanship in these matters cannot be assumed but may be ensured through consultation.

While it is necessary to conceptualise a broad system-change, it is essential to develop an order of priorities and relevant linkages. Action in respect of critical sectors will dictate a whole second order of priorities. Doing one-thing-at-a-time will not serve as webs or networks of change are required to sustain the initial thrust. Nor can the time frame be ignored. It is later than we think and tolerance limits are low. Yet, the objective situation is by no means wholly dismal. There are many positive factors and assets on which to build and, once inertia is overcome momentum will develop, given the ability and flexibility to reinforce success.

**A**t a time when almost everybody is groping for a way out of the present morass, a clear statement of goals and strategies that provides direction and purpose can restore faith and galvanise action. No blueprint is ever complete. There are no final solutions. But if the critical structures are in position, construction of the rest of the edifice should not present any insuperable problem.

Any Indian government, it has been truly said, must be left of Centre if it is to be viable and credible in a nation in which poverty is the supreme political issue. But so far, an old fashioned Fabian socialism and even more radical rhetoric has been a substitute for action since most parties have been dependent on vote banks manipulated by vested interests

of various kinds. Such political feudalism is becoming untenable with rising political consciousness and mounting pressures for social and economic change. A Presidential-parliamentary system on the French model is sometimes canvassed and appears attractive in so far as it promises stability. But in a large, diverse, federally oriented country like India this is likely to create more problems than it solves, apart from risking arbitrary, personalised rule of a kind from which the electorate so recently recoiled.

**A** more likely option would be to attempt to build a national democratic alliance of parties genuinely committed to democracy and social justice and agreed on the structural changes necessary for this purpose. This may or may not be a grand coalition but would imply a broad-based government willing to devise a variety of ways of widening the area of participation and consultation within Parliament and outside. Nor is Marxism and class war the only possible answer. There is a Gandhian alternative which while not rejecting aspects of Marxist analysis, would resort to trusteeship, consensus-building, struggle, humanism and communitarian action within the framework of a liberal democracy.

Who will bell the cat? Who is going to adopt and implement such a programme, the cynic will ask? This is where education and public awareness can build commitment, pressures for constructive action, and the courage to dare and do. Once public opinion is mobilised, the political instrumentalities can be forged whether through existing parties or, in time, through new forces. There are inherent compulsions in the situation that not all politicians and parties can afford to ignore for long. They are sitting on a volcano and the realisation that this is so may itself generate action. Self-interest apart, there are also factors of youthful idealism, patriotic zeal and the numerical strength of the disadvantaged that can be summoned to constructive purpose. Mobilisation is supremely important — and people will rally to a worthwhile banner. The political arithmetic is not inimical to change and the promise of the Second Republic.



# A decade of decision

RAJNI KOTHARI

THE decade has begun amid ominous signs from many thresholds. Internationally, the processes of both detente at the top and diffusion in the middle have received serious jolts and a renewed polarization seems on its way to superimpose itself on the world scene despite the emergent multilateralism of the seventies. Whether this will produce a second cold war will depend on the struggle between the bipolar and multipolar trends, on the capacity of the multilateralists to stop the super powers from imposing their new design of once again dividing the world into contending power blocs (tied together less by military pacts and more by strategic cooptation).

For India, this is likely to be rather pertinent, given the geopolitical importance of the subcontinent,

the pitched battle in Afghanistan and the sustained pressure from the Soviet Union for us to become its principal ally in Asia. This may well lead us into a competition for regional hegemony and a regional arms race, make our neighbours fearful of us and strengthen chauvinist tendencies within the country. No matter what our values and vision about ourselves, we will not be permitted to work out our destiny so long as we keep playing a power game, the terms of which are set by outside forces.

Domestically, new confrontations are replacing the normal processes of competition and conflict, increasingly being expressed in not just violent ways but in forms of violence that leave very deep scars and in which even individual acts of assault or defense become acutely political. As



this happens, the government of the day ceases to be a custodian of law and order and becomes partisan in a rather direct way. Elections and parties do not any longer provide the basis for either governmental performance or the legitimacy of ruling elites; legislative proceedings are not taken seriously even by MPs and MLAs, and the judiciary has ceased to attract deference and present an aura of high integrity and objectivity.

In the meanwhile, the bureaucracy, the police, the intelligence services and law enforcement agencies have all been demoralized and suffer from a feeling of being pawns in a highly arbitrary and personalized struggle for survival. The system has all but broken down. Short of determined and carefully worked out intervention, it is bound to break down long before the decade has run its course.

**S**ocially, the decade is likely to witness deep convulsions. In the countryside the struggle for social justice waged by the deprived and the dispossessed is likely to be at once backed by new resolves to forge ahead and face severe backlash from entrenched groups, with most political parties failing to intervene in any decisive manner. Meanwhile, the political arithmetic of rival coalitions of power is likely to become more rigid than ever and elected governments, unable to perform in the general interest, are likely to align themselves increasingly with particular interests, in the process undermining the basis of political community. Baghpat is only symptomatic of a more widespread process at work.

Such a decline in consensus is likely to become more endemic and institutionalized than in the past. The seventies witnessed a growing failure of the electoral process to provide effective party governments that are accepted as legitimate both by other parties and by rival groups within the ruling party. The eighties are likely to lead to (a) an increasing dissociation between electoral and party political processes and governmental processes, and (b), a leadership vacuum that will be filled by a new brand of professionals who derive their base from neither the values

and visions of an *elite* whose claim to power is based on natural or proved worth or from the dynamics of mass politics that is mediated by party, regional and institutional mechanisms but rather from a conception of politics as a business, a management enterprise.

With this the relationship between the public realm and vested interests will not be based any longer on the infiltration of the latter into the former; the two will become co-terminus and the public realm will lose the autonomy it used to enjoy for so long. Alongside, there will also take place new refinements in the art of political rhetoric and in the controlled manipulation of communication media, 'mobilizing' the people into making 'choices' in the determination of which they have had no hand.

Such an estrangement between the management of power at the top and the massive stirrings for change at the bottom can only produce a deepening sense of despair among the large masses at the receiving end who had for centuries been deprived and dispossessed but who had found something positive in modern politics and nurtured a new longing and expectation from it. Such despair, if not offset by a renewed input of democratic politics coming from new alignments of leadership and institutional infrastructures, is likely to turn into desperation and a scenario of growing confrontations and chaos.

**M**eanwhile, beyond the usual travail of mass politics induced by non-performing governments as found in the framework of caste and class, rural and urban and rich and poor, new frustrations are likely to surface in sharp and unexpected ways. While there has been much talk in the past of youth power, apart from either the cynical use of symbols by powerful politicians bent upon purging a party of an older generation or the romantic appeals based on the presumed selflessness of the young made by oppositional leaders (from the Naxalites to JP), and apart of course from the usual 'nuisance value' of student leaders, there has been little organized leverage that the youth, representing the most

numerous social category of India, has been able to achieve.

Many years ago, during a more hopeful phase of the country's politics, Indira Gandhi had talked of two considerable majorities in India — the poor and the young. There seems little chance of these two coalescing into a powerful radical thrust, both seem equally helpless. But it is precisely from this helplessness, and against the general environment of despair and hopelessness, that the felt deprivations and equally felt incapacities of the young could well explode in ways that the system may find difficult to contain.

The traumas of a politicized youth are likely to get more generalized in the coming years in the context of a growing economic squeeze felt by the middle classes in general and the lower middle class in particular. There is already evidence of growing polarization in the economic and occupational structure, based on proletarianization and even pauperization of traditional middle class vocational groups, and on fast deteriorating opportunities for the very large lumpen element after a period of unplanned and unnatural growth in the tertiary sector, and especially in government and allied services.

**A** number of other sources of dissent and disenchantment are going to prove equally challenging if not far more so, given the fact that their politicization takes on more organic forms and their grievances are far more pertinent to India's model of nation-building. The regional question is going to prove far more troublesome than in the past unless the long overdue initiative of territorial reorganization based on socially as well as administratively viable State, district and urban units is taken up without loss of time. The much lamented separatist or even secessionist tendencies are a consequence of unimaginative policies in respect of the structure and organization of governing units and the almost deliberate pursuit of sharp disparities within these units. (All parties are to blame for this. Thus the progressive CPI(M) government in West Bengal seems to have cared little for the abysmally poor and underdeveloped northern districts



from where the movement for Uttarakhand has now arisen)

Closely tied with the issue of regional stirrings is the growing assertion of the tribal population in the North and the North East (including open revolt and fury as in Tripura). Whereas, unlike in the large Hindi-speaking belt, an imaginative policy of bestowing Statehood on distinct tribal populations did go a long way in containing sources of separatism and disintegration, nothing very much was done to undo the oppressive structure of colonial and neo-colonial relations as found on the one hand in the ownership and control of vital means of production and, on the other hand, in the form of oppressive and discriminating administrative, electoral and political structures.

The eighties will see further reverberations of the new political consciousness based on ethnic and regional identities among the tribal people. Much will depend on the understanding shown by the Centre and the rest of the country. The magnitude and persistence of these demands will give rise to new forebodings of impending disintegration of the country and the need for toughness by central authority, especially among ultra-nationalist elements who have always suffered from a sense of insecurity about the Indian State, but also among certain Left-wing groups (like the CPM in West Bengal) though for different reasons.

Other causes will lend themselves to the spread of important movements of dissent and protest against gross injustice and violation of basic rights. Though the original inspiration for these may have come from urban centres (in some cases even from abroad) the situation in the country is forcing them to both enlarge the scope and definition and change the basic character of a given movement. Important among these are the women's movement, the environmental movement, protest movements in many areas against techno-economic decisions affecting entire communities and their life support systems being taken in far-off places and, slowly but surely coming along, movements of the unorganized labouring classes in the countryside

against the combined terror of the landlords, the capitalist class and the State.

Often, these various forms of protest converge into a single comprehensive movement (e.g., in Tehri Garhwal) and receive enthusiastic response from the youth, the intelligentsia and sometimes even sections of the press. On the other hand, the general response of the government, the political parties, the mass media in general and, above all, the entrenched leadership of these movements (e.g., women and environmentalists) tend to either remain aloof from the worst manifestations of inhuman oppression or to pay lip service, engage in irresponsible enticements and exploit such situations for their own personal career advancements.

At the same time, a new class of official intellectuals tend to show sympathy for these causes, promise to take up their case with the powers that be, induce misplaced faith among the leaders of the movements and chasten their fighting spirit — and in the end do very little. As this is likely to grow in a period of decline of party and other regular mechanisms of redress, the result will be widespread cynicism in all ranks and an endemic feeling of powerlessness in the face of 'vested interests'.

Meanwhile, cynicism and a growing sense of powerlessness will spread within the mainstream Establishment itself, given the increasing likelihood of arbitrary decision-making and the further erosion of institutional norms and rules of the game. The bureaucracy, the senior echelons of the law and order and intelligence set-ups, the scientific and technical intelligentsia and the management cadres in the public corporate sector — the whole apparatus of the modern State — are likely to face the pressure of an increasingly shrinking structure of decision-making, the rise of new professionals described above and the undermining of institutional buffers enjoying sectoral autonomy and legal and conventional norms.

The rule of anonymity will be further sacrificed, partisan commitments (that too along personalized and not party lines) will be demanded and more and more people in key

professional positions will take the line of least resistance and allow things to go over to whoever happens to be the latest caucus — while it lasts. The net result will be not just a decline of party government and erosion of federal and local structures but a decline and erosion of government itself.

What we have done so far is to schematize a likely unfoldment of the processes that are already at work. What emerges is a scenario of a growing hiatus between deep stirrings for change and a system characterized by stagnation, institutional collapse and closure. It is a scenario of virtual disintegration of the polity. But it is also a scenario which could provide raw material for new waves of populist politics, new battle cries aimed at exploiting the insecurity of the haves and the despair of the have-nots, and a new crop of demagoguery, personal histrionics and solidarity calls. The international situation and the highly troubled regional politics of the subcontinent and beyond could play into such a design, or made to do so.

And yet we also know that in a number of ways this country also provides the scenario of a vast potential at all levels that could build towards a genuine alternative. Large capacities and skills exist here in rather interesting combinations — at the grass roots, at the regional level and in the national framework of both technological and institutional capabilities. Economically the country seems to be right now in the throes of a crisis and yet the long term indicators seem to be quite heartening if only one knew how to harness available resources and skills towards a major breakthrough.

Politically, too, there exists a large catchment area of basic capacities and drives, widespread stirring of political consciousness, new possibilities of coalition making worked out through the democratic process and, above all, a deepening awareness that things cannot go on like this. There is need to change the nature of the system for undertaking long overdue changes in the framework of power and opportunities — and the need for a new political force to undertake all this. The very period



of a decline in credibility of existing parties has also seen a heightened commitment to democratic norms and values among the people and a much more widespread aversion to authoritarian solutions of crisis situations

What is lacking is an institutional capacity of drawing all this into a national framework that responds to this vast diversity of capabilities and generates the necessary transformation of dispersed skills and capacities into a macro system that is productive, relevant and credible. What is needed is consciously to reject populist shortcuts, accept governance as a process in which the people are in fact, not in rhetoric, involved at various levels. For this it is necessary to reinvigorate intermediate structures that fill the continuum between the Centre and the various peripheries, reorganize and restructure political and administrative units to make such a continuum effective, and through all this and the operation of a nationwide political party, produce a coordinate framework of governance and participation. And to imbue all this with a programme of change, a perspective and a vision

**I**t is the gradual erosion and deliberate neglect and incapacitation of these structures and the perspective of programmes and policies that they are supposed to carry out — the two aspects are intimately related — that leads the political elite to resort to the shortcut of populist politics. Under a leadership that is unable to disaggregate demands through a decentralized framework of governance (as was the case under the Congress system) this leads to a politics of premature promises as a device to deal with basic inadequacies in policies and a steady decline in the performance of the system

Such a method of misleading and disorienting a public that has become keen on results soon begins to be looked upon as an exercise in deceit and leads to a fast deterioration in the legitimacy of the system. In turn, the managers at the centre of the system seek to deal with restlessness and alienation of the public by recourse to arbitrary and authoritarian exercise of power.

Failure to deliver the goods in a period of growing expectations points to a need for basic changes in the institutional framework of the system but instead produces a politics of postures, a purposely diffuse populist rhetoric aimed at the poor and the dispossessed, dramatic overtures to socialism (which is simply equated with nationalization and State ownership) and, above all, a new genre of Statism according to which the fate of the socially deprived and the destitute rests securely in the hands of the State and a strong central authority. This leads to a political style that seeks to establish a direct link with the masses and evokes symbols of solidarity and blind trust and, in turn, underrates the importance of intermediate institutions and mediating structures

**C**ontributing further to the culture of populism and an exaggerated emphasis on the centre of the system has been the political stance of the opposition in India. There has been an increase in the tendency of the opposition to subordinate other goals to the simple aim of displacing those who happen to be in power. As democracy entails both representative and plebiscitary connotations, it lends justification to populist strands (including mob actions) and weakens the authority of governments and of constitutional techniques of protest. Frustration in the struggle for power — or in maintaining a coalition intact — often leads to an overemphasis on the agitational approach which then generates its own impetus and becomes a dominant idiom of politics. This makes the pursuit of normal channels of opposition and dissent vulnerable to defeat by extremist politics, and puts a special premium on skills that distract from the normal pursuit of party politics

In seeking to restructure the political system it is necessary to consciously reject the shortcut of populism in which both the Congress and the Opposition parties seem to have found their escape — an escape from the hard tasks of institution-building.

It is important to insist on this point. A large part of the recent political commentary places too

great an emphasis on personalities, their sense of personal insecurity and their attempt to use the public realm as an arena for resolving personal crises. While this dimension is no doubt relevant and should not be underrated in a period of instability and drift, one should also look at more systemic aspects of a nation's crisis which in turn permit such individual adventures at the expense of the larger society. The dramatic role of individuals in historical change becomes possible only when the institutional structures prove to be fragile or lacking in firm anchorage in a society's mores and traditions.

In fact there is reason to believe that the achievements of the Indian model in the two decades after Independence were a result of very special institutional factors. Most important of these was the operation of a highly dispersed and decentralized party system which made the imported framework of government and administration respond to the indigenous framework of Indian society and economy. The basic thrust of the Indian model was to create a unified system that was however sensitive to the social reality of a highly dispersed and decentralized society and which permitted quite a large role to voluntary effort outside the State sector.

This has been the basic Indian model, not of grafting some unity in the form of a monolith, but rather something that emerges out of a given population and land mass with a highly dispersed structure of social organisation and a voluntaristic ethos. This was possible largely because of the continuous presence of a unique party system. With the decline of party as the basic institution of the system and its displacement by the bureaucracy on the one hand and personal charisma on the other, the system has entered a period of crisis.

**I**t is necessary to return to this model of development and integration within the new context of widespread politicization on the one hand and dispersed capabilities and challenges on the other. Something like the Congress system but more responsive to the stirrings of mass poli-



tics and their at once regional and class manifestations. The challenge of the eighties is to recoup from the erosion of institutions produced by the populist shortcuts of the seventies, restore the political process in its fullness and, with this in view, restructure the distribution of regional, administrative and economic power.

This will call for a new political formation that draws upon the vast array of capabilities that already exists. Fortunately, the very years that saw the erosion and decay of the federal and decentralized institutional framework of Indian democracy have also been the years of a great deal of innovative thinking and action at different levels of national endeavour. There is evidence of a new consciousness at work, not just among ordinary people (which we discussed earlier in this article) but also among sectors of creative thought and action. A prolonged national crisis takes ordinary discontent deeper and provokes a new sense of challenge in scores of people.

These have been the years of the growth of a large variety of social experiments by thousands of committed individuals working in rural and urban areas, in almost all the regions of the country, many of these among the deprived and the underprivileged. These efforts are informed by both a participant and a decentralized perspective, are understood (even if not openly announced) as basically political, and are seen as part of restructuring the Indian development effort on the basis of a democratic socialist ideology

These have also been years of intellectual ferment, of rethinking the premises of national development with a view to giving it an indigenous content and authenticity, and of a conscious effort among intellectuals at being part of the national political mainstream. The Emergency in particular proved to be a watershed in moving these intellectuals out of their secluded preserves. The failures and frustrations of the Janata phase added to it. The resulting disenchantment with all organized parties is producing new stirrings and a resolve to take on a more openly political role.

Also, these years of deepening discontent and a series of failed experiments in coming forward with political alternatives have led to some real soul-searching among segments of political parties and their affiliate organizations, leading many individuals to seek out new ways of organizing political activity. These frustrated but highly motivated cadres at both local and intermediate levels are to be found in almost all parties and together add up to hundreds of rather able and experienced people.

Finally, there are the people themselves and their own local leaders, inspirers and intellectuals, engaged in a variety of mass movements — in the lower peasantry, in the not yet unionized strata of the labouring classes, in the national peripheries raging with revolt against local 'colonialisms' of various sorts, in the youth itself which has for so long been exploited by parties and political upstarts. Still in a state of disarray and often of disorientation, many of these mass movements hold the promise of forging new coalitions on the ground, provided that there is a clear perspective and an ideology suited to Indian conditions

The task that faces these grassroots, intellectual, political and movement activists, is to fashion an all-India macro structure within which the series of decentralized micro experiments and thought processes can be brought together and mobilized towards an integrated whole. They must also come over their incipient parochialism, personal egos and sectarian outlook. The path that lies before them is bound to be rather frustrating and often bleak, confronted as they are by an alien establishment, unless they are able to think in terms of a patient process of building a national alternative.

This then is the call of the eighties, a decade in which the nation should decide one way or another: painstakingly restructure the national polity or passively continue on the path of dissipation and fragmentation not just of the democratic order but of the political community called India as well.



# Period of turbulence

GIRILAL JAIN

HOPEFULLY India will come out of the eighties all of one piece with its democratic institutions intact. But she has entered a turbulent decade and this turbulence is likely to increase as time goes by. The prospect is gloomier than at any time since independence.

This pessimism is not the product of the present upsurge of Muslim communalism, though it reinforces it, especially because I am inclined to take the view that the problem is likely to become much worse in the coming years for reasons which I shall mention later. Nor is this pessimism basically the result of the agitation in Assam, though this, too, strengthens it.

I am despondent for a variety of reasons — the continuing population explosion, the bleak economic prospects, the virtual collapse of the education and party systems, the poor quality of political leadership and so on. With all this we might

manage to bungle along if Mrs Gandhi displays in full measure her old skills for leadership. She might see us through this very difficult decade without too much damage to the system. But this hope, or to be more accurate, this prayer, is itself an indication of the desperate situation we are in.

Despite all else I would not take so pessimistic a view if I were not persuaded that India's industrialisation programme has got stuck after the import substitution phase and that it is not likely to proceed fast enough to provide adequate employment avenues for millions of educated, semi-educated and illiterate young men and women entering the labour market every year and to relieve pressure on land. But I am so persuaded.

The rising prices of oil, the poor prospect of the country becoming self-sufficient in this regard in the coming years, the growing and wear-



ness and protectionism in the West, the absence of technological, entrepreneurial and managerial resourcefulness of the Japanese type and scale, the unimaginative political and bureaucratic intervention in and, indeed, control over the economy and the inadequacy of domestic resources make it difficult to take an optimistic view of the economic outlook in the eighties. The World Bank and other international agencies have made similar assessments.

**T**he government is showing signs that it is alive to the need to make a break with the sterile populist past. But it is making half-hearted moves and it is doubtful that it is capable of anything much better given the twin facts that almost 50 per cent of our population lives below the poverty line and they no longer accept this as god-given fate. Indeed, as restlessness grows as a result of the continuing inflation and rising prices on the one hand and spread of some kind of education and communications on the other, the government may feel tempted to strike an anti-business stance. No leader looking for immediate popularity or even relief from pressures can afford to appear to be pro-business and pro-industry.

The situation would have been parlous if agriculture were also marking time as industry has been for years. Mercifully it is not. The country has acquired the capacity to feed itself and is not likely to lose this capacity in the foreseeable future despite the continuing rise in population. This is a remarkable achievement of which any developing country would legitimately be proud. But it is sheer wishful thinking to believe that agricultural development can provide the basis for the development of cottage and small-scale industries on a sufficiently large scale in the countryside to prevent the drift to towns and cities of the educated village youth and even unskilled labour. Such industries, too, can grow mostly only in towns. In India, even decentralisation on the Japanese model does not appear practical. The realistic prospect, therefore, is that our towns and cities will continue to attract people from the countryside. The consequences can easily be imagined.

The Indian political system would have come under considerable pressure even if economic development had proceeded according to plans. Modernisation is unsettling. It involves the uprooting of millions of people, the erosion of old mores and loyalties and the feeling of psychological security that goes with them. The more the people's expectations are met the more they are aroused. This has been the experience of all societies and India could not have been an exception.

In our case the problem has been complicated by other features, some of which demand special notice. The pressure on land, already acute at the time of independence, has become intolerable on account of the growth of population. This means that the number of landless has increased sharply despite attempts at land reforms, schools and roads have spread to the countryside and added to tensions there. The rate of industrial growth has been and is likely to remain woefully inadequate to absorb the young men and women coming out of our schools and colleges.

**M**odern education or what passes for modern education in our country has for decades been criticised on the ground that it produces clerks. This criticism is legitimate but it is not penetrating enough. Modern education promotes a strong bias in favour of populism and against entrepreneurship even in a country like the United States, as Irving Kristol has shown. Our education system has had a great deal to do with Jawaharlal Nehru's economic policy with its emphasis on bureaucratic controls and Mrs Gandhi's populism in the late sixties.

Nehru could follow a middle-of-the-road approach because the pressure was still manageable and he could maintain his popularity among the educated youth and evolve a national consensus on the strength of the results he could produce. Mrs Gandhi had to resort to nationalisation of banks in order to give herself a radical image because nothing else could have availed her in her bid for mass popularity and in her struggle against the party bosses in 1969.

Right now she is apparently in a strong position to resist the temptation to resort to populist slogans. But things can change as they did for her earlier in 1974. It is often not realised that demand for liberty without a proper sense of responsibility and discipline is also a form of populism. While some of us ask for western living standards, others insist on western-style liberties without realising that both need to be accompanied by hard work and enormous discipline to materialise and survive.

These problems would have arisen even if by some miracle English had continued to serve as the sole medium of instruction in higher education. Muslim communalism arose and prospered, leading finally to Partition, long before regional languages had come into their own. The shift to regional languages was bound to aggravate the problem and it has. Indeed, the rise of regional elites educated through the media of regional languages has just begun. The English-knowing elites are still in command and are able to keep the country together within the framework of democratic institutions. When they finally give way as they must in course of time, we do not know what will happen.

**D**uring the Janata dispensation we witnessed the rise of aggressive casteism in 1977-78-79 and we saw the beginning of the Assam agitation in 1979. Some of us believed that these developments could have been avoided if we had a strong central government headed by an individual like Mrs Gandhi and backed by a reasonably coherent party like the Congress in the past. There was some merit in this view. Good management can help mitigate and control social tensions. The Janata as a loose coalition of its constituents and certain social segments and interests could not possibly produce a government capable of strong action and firm policy. But the trend in that direction was established long before the Janata came to power. Economic growth and spread of education promote assertiveness among the beneficiaries.

The same logic accounts for the revival of Muslim communalism. The



Muslim community has certain legitimate grievances. It has not received a proper representation in the services and Urdu has not been given its due place. But one must be naive to believe that the grievances account for the recent riots. On the contrary, it is those Muslims who have been the beneficiaries of education and economic development who are most vocal and assertive. It is worth recalling that the Muslims were not being so discriminated against when they raised the demand for Pakistan.

**O**n the face of it, there is no connection between these three developments — casteism, the Assam agitation and the recent riots. In reality, there is. All of them are the result of the rise of an educated and reasonably prosperous middle class among the so-called backward castes, the Assamese and the Muslims. The Assamese problem is complicated by the mass immigration of a large number of Bangladeshi Muslims, so much so that the Assam people have become a minority in their own State. But an anti-Bengali sentiment could have grown in Assam even in the absence of such a massive immigration.

These problems are inherently not unmanageable, though Muslim communalism may not be so easy to cope with in view of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in neighbouring Muslim countries both to the west and east of us and the moral and material support extremist organisations like the Jamaat-e-Islami are receiving from these external sources which now have unheard of funds at their disposal. But they call for a skilful political leadership at all levels and an efficient and a reasonably honest and impartial bureaucratic machine. Unfortunately both are lacking.

A contradiction has been built into the Indian experiment of modernisation and economic development within the democratic framework from the very beginning. The people had to be *changed* into modern men and women and at the same time given the right to choose the rulers. These contradictory aspirations and compulsions are built into the Constitution

which was framed under the haunting shadow of the communal carnage following Partition. While the Constituent Assembly was busy framing the basic law, Gandhi was shot and 'communist inspired peasants were cutting the throats of peasants in Telangana. Some members had difficulty in attending full sessions because of the curfew imposed in Delhi in the futile effort to stop communal butchery. There was evidence enough that stern controls were needed.'

That was why the constitution itself provided for the constitutional dictatorship. Mrs. Gandhi instituted in June 1975. Acting on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, the President could proclaim a state of emergency and suspend the fundamental rights and bar appeals to courts for writs such as habeas corpus to test the validity of the government's actions. He did not need to find that a disturbance serious enough to constitute a threat to the country's security had broken out. It was enough for him to say that he anticipated such a threat.

**A**s Henry C. Hart writes in an article on the Indian Constitution in *Asian Survey*, University of California (April 1980): 'with the co-operation of a complacent president, therefore, a prime minister can find in the Constitution powers to jail critics, including members of Parliament, censor press reports of opposition speeches in Parliament denouncing what is being done, arrest citizens assembling in any constituency to protest, and thus cow Parliament into perpetuating the emergency. Should such a tamed parliament fear the voters, it may pass a bill extending its own life, under the proclamation of emergency, for one year at a time.'

That was not all. 'In the Constitution of India, that application of authoritarian provisions to situations short of national crises is explicitly provided for in advance. At least three such provisions are sufficiently sweeping to affect the constitutional balance between the power of those ruling from Delhi and the power of citizen voters to accept or reject their rulers.'

'First is Article 356, the most plenary of several authorizations for

central suppression of state self-government (note that this is entirely additional to the emergency power just described).

'If the President on receipt of a report from the governor of a state or otherwise, is satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the government of the state cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of this constitution, the President may by proclamation — (a) assume to himself all or any of the functions of the government of the state

'Control measures, once in a constitution, tend to get used. From 1950 to 1977 President's Rule was imposed 36 times for an aggregate duration of 20 years. Even more significant, three-fourths of these suppressions occurred in the years after the 1967 elections upset Congress governments in several states.

'Second is the explicit constitutional authorisation for imprisonment without trial, which had been a means of imperial control in India since 1818. David Bayley wrote the authoritative evaluation of preventive detention in 1962. Reluctantly, he concluded that Indian circumstances warranted it, and even warranted the absolute exclusion of the courts from police power. But two of his findings, along the way, have proved remarkably prophetic. One is that the need for preventive detention is seen by governments not so much to prevent incitement to communal violence or borderland insurrections, as to pre-empt agitation, or what he identifies as 'coercive public protest'. The other finding is contained in his last paragraph: 'The more unrestricted becomes the use of power, the greater *de facto* is the reliance of a country upon the character of its leaders. In India this consideration leads to the oft-repeated question "After Nehru, What?"' an even more foreboding fascination.

'After the Nehru era, but before Mrs. Gandhi's emergency, death while in preventive detention became as conventional a method as trial to dispose of the cases of young men believed to be Naxalites. Amnesty International reported on the phenomenon. Unfortunately, Indian police



are no more immune than other police to the decay of legal limitations once outside scrutiny is dispensed with

'The third "normal" breach of constitutional checks on state power is the peculiar Indian qualification of the bill of rights. The words of the constitution subject freedom of speech to the laws that may be made "in the interests of public order" or "in relation to defamation". Freedom to assemble is likewise subjected to laws that may be made "in the interests of ... public order". Corresponding gaps are pierced in the constitutional defences of other civil rights. In India as elsewhere, conflict occurs between the valued rights of the individual and the necessary powers of the state to keep order and defend vulnerable segments of the population. What is peculiar to India is the circumscription of individual rights in the words of the fundamental law

'Over against these formidable grants of authoritarian powers are equally plenary provisions for accountability of government to the voters. All adults are enfranchised. They vote directly for the Lok Sabha, the house of Parliament to which the political executive is accountable. There is but one loophole: the normal five year life of Parliament may be extended during an emergency, but it can only be done by vote of the Parliament itself. It takes few words to define the provisions for rule by popular consent. In fact, these few provisions of the constitution have set in motion a great political awakening of formerly isolated, hierarchically conditioned, apolitical villagers. The seven general elections have combined the functions of pageants, adult schools, recruitment and training sessions for leaders, incentives to build parties, construction of political agendas, forewarning of incumbents as well as legitimization of governments. Would-be democrats and dictators, constitutionalists and revolutionaries wait in India for the uncertain verdict of illiterate rice-growers and tea-stall proprietors. The provisions for popular consent, too, have taken on a life of their own.

'Sensitized by the events of the last five years, India appears to have

two constitutions, pieced together into one document. One gives power to a few leaders in Delhi to control the country, through coercion of its politically active stratum. The other makes all citizens voters and empowers them to choose and reject their rulers. The tension is severe. It may well be too much for a single code of law to sustain, once it has become manifest. And there are other contradictions.'

**T**hese contradictions could be contained during the Nehru era. He and the Congress could play both roles — of promoting association of the people with the country's governance and imposing a measure of discipline on them. Since then the contradictions have been threatening to overwhelm the system, producing Mrs Gandhi's emergency on the one extreme and the Janata's utter lack of discipline and sense of purpose on the other.

The poor people's support for Mrs Gandhi in recognition of the need for authority to protect them against the better off castes and the intelligentsia's alienation from her are expressions of the same contradictory pulls in our society. The Congress (I) certainly cannot reconcile these as the Congress could because it is more of Mrs Gandhi's praetorian guard (if it can properly be called that) than a party. Indeed, it is open to question whether anyone can build a party *ala* the Congress of the old days. Weak politicians in search of popularity cannot impose discipline on turbulent sections of the populace, especially in difficult period of scarcities, rising prices and growing unemployment. Surely they cannot provide a government which can resist sectional demands and pressures and act in the larger national interest.

The impact of this kind of politics on the permanent bureaucracy can only be negative. Bureaucrats can resist pressure and temptation only at considerable risk to themselves. The mass transfers and arbitrary promotions and demotions make that abundantly clear. And why should they be expected to be more solicitous of the national interest than those who can claim to speak in the name of the people?



# Westminster model crumbles

S SAHAY

WE are witnessing today a rapid erosion of the Westminster-type of parliamentary democracy we opted for after Independence. Much of the stress and strain this country has been undergoing is explainable by the general lack of faith in the present system, without active consideration of an alternative. The result is a rebound to the sort of authoritarianism more in tune with the ethos of this country.

The argument that the Constitution and all that it stands for has been the result of over 100 years of constitutional and political evolution and hence it is wholly incorrect to suggest that at the time of Independence we adopted an alien system, is proving to be of limited relevance. It is true that no system can be said to be alien if it has been consciously adapted and practised for decades, but then the body seems to be rejecting the transplant.

The reason is that we have been living in two kinds of worlds, the smaller but influential world of liberal socialism, English education, scientific outlook, and the larger world of illiteracy, poverty and religious and traditional outlook. So long as the lines were clearly drawn and the minority dominated the majority, the system worked. But even then, when the issue of mass participation in the freedom struggle came to the fore, politicians under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi came off their high perch and talked to villagers in a language they could understand, the language of folklore, of *Rama-*

*yana*, of basic problems confronting the downtrodden.

Understandably, the Constitution, which had to reconcile various interests and points of view, reflects this duality. The sonorous Preamble to the Constitution and the Fundamental Rights have hardly emanated from the people, even though they have 'adopted, enacted and given to ourselves this Constitution'. We owe these to well meaning liberal politicians whose wisdom was matched by their education, who scanned the constitutions of the world to produce the best for this country. The Directive Principles contain many down-to-earth ideas such as village panchayats, the right to work, to education and to public assistance, participation of workers in management, protection of the weaker sections, raising the standard of living and nutrition.

To emphasize the obvious, adult suffrage, at one stroke, reversed the fount from which power flowed. That this meant virtually a return to the villages became clearer with every general election held. What we have been witnessing ever since Independence is the gradual ascendancy of the masses over the urban, English educated elite in the decision-making process.

The situation has been of inbuilt conflict. But during Nehru's premiership the strain seemed less pronounced because he himself lived and functioned successfully in both worlds. His symbolic dip in the Ganga was as relevant as his donning western dress when in Europe or the United States. Lal Bahadur Shastri's premiership was too brief to invite comment, but in his personal life and

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Extracted from the column, 'A Close Look' in *The Statesman*.



manners he reflected the tilt towards the masses.

The politician who has been quick on the uptake is Mrs Gandhi. Initial opposition to her premiership by the old guard, who had made her Prime Minister on the assumption that she would be a figurehead, perhaps compelled her to lean on the masses while at the same time attempting to break the 'Syndicate', but successive elections have convinced her that, for power, she has to go mainly to the villages, and once she has obtained power no urban section really matters. She can get away with anything, as the Emergency has clearly shown. And from this flows her contempt for all that the elite holds dear, freedom of speech and expression, the rule of law, the supremacy of the Constitution, and the allocation of powers between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. The massive mandate she has received this year has further strengthened her conviction and her contempt for the urban elite. And she has made no secret of it.

Her attitude is best exemplified by her views on the press. She has just told the editor of a Delhi magazine that she does not know what newspaper commentators write because she hardly reads what they write.

What Mrs Gandhi has not stated clearly, but which is a fact of life, is that she could not care less even for the bureaucracy, the judiciary and legislature, so long as she, because of her equation with the masses, can bend individuals and institutions to her will.

**P**olitical strategy of this nature has its own limitations. She may need votes for power, but she needs talent to administer the country. But talent cannot be available if you virtually destroy the structure and alienate the very people whose active cooperation you need. This explains why she can claim fewer bureaucrats and politicians wholly loyal to her. This also explains why initiatives have been slower in coming this time than was the case even during the Emergency. But failure or shortcoming in this regard will increase her attempt to hold on to power, or to take the country in the direction she wants to.

Self-centredness of not only politicians, but of we Indians as a whole, has resulted not only in the weakening of the party system itself but of the various organs created by the Constitution. Minoo Masani is right in suggesting that the Westminster model is based on a spirit of compromise, which is what politics is all about, but in which we are singularly lacking. It is also based on cheerful acceptance of one's place in opposition, again something which is unpalatable to us. This explains why politicians are always climbing on one bandwagon or another.

**T**he result of all this is that, while a valuable system is being slowly discarded, there is no open, conscious adoption of another. We all seem to be helplessly trudging in a direction which is beginning to become clear to us.

Matters are not helped by criticism of the system by the very people who are part of it. Parliamentarians do not believe in parliamentary democracy. Judges do not believe in the present system of justice. The other day a Supreme Court judge exhorted his audience 'You have discarded British rule and then customs. Discard Anglo-Indian jurisprudence, bury it deep.' He suggested overhaul of the system of judicial recruitment. How many peasants and industrial workers, he asked, ever reached the Bench? Could exploiters of the poor ever dispense true justice to the exploited, could the son of a millionaire appreciate the case presented by an industrial worker?

If the judge implied a proportional representation of the various sections in the judiciary then it needs to be objected to. But what is more relevant is that preferable to this rhetoric would have been the suggestion of an alternative judicial system. The Law Commission has had the occasion to consider the problem deeply. It came to the conclusion that the present judicial system has taken long in evolving. Changes, modifications and amendments have been made both in the hierarchy of courts as well as in the procedures followed by them, as society has gradually become more developed. Complications and delays in disposal of cases

are not so much because of the technical and cumbersome nature of our judicial system as because of other factors operating both inside and outside the courts. The Commission was clearly of the view that it would be a retrograde step to revert to the primitive methods of administration of justice by taking disputes to a group of ordinary laymen ignorant of the modern complexities of life and not conversant with legal concepts and procedure.

Anybody who has had the occasion to watch the increasing number of new and young members of Parliament at work cannot help wondering whether they do indeed believe in the efficacy of the parliamentary system. A seat in Parliament is considered a source of power and influence, but is parliamentary democracy considered a way of life? Do proceedings in Parliament and the general atmosphere reflect a spirit of give and take, of reasoned debate? One wonders.

Nor is this all. Field reports indicate growing cynicism among voters. They realize that vote-getting has become an end in itself for politicians. But so far as the voter is concerned it is just the beginning of his expectations, which have been belied time and again.

**F**rom the results of the last two parliamentary elections in which the fortunes of Mrs Gandhi and of Janata radically changed, it is possible to build a comfortable theory of the sagacity of the Indian voter or of the successful working of the parliamentary democratic system. But a deeper study is necessary of the elections than has been available so far. Some believe that the 1977 election was largely determined by North Indian voters' resentment against the use of force in extending family planning methods, just as the outcome of the 1980 election was largely determined by voters' fury over Janata quarrels and the rise in prices.

Come to think of it, ever since Independence no ruling party at the Centre has ever secured in a general election even 50% of the popular vote. In this year's parliamentary election the Congress (I) obtained



42.58% of the votes cast but bagged 66.85% of the seats. In the 1977 elections which swept the Janata Party into power, they and the Congress for Democracy together polled 43.17% of the votes cast. In earlier elections the Congress polled 45% in 1952, 47.8% in 1957, 40.73% in 1962, 40.73% in 1967, and 43.03% in 1971. And with minority votes it always ruled the country. Specifically this means that the country has always been ruled with the support of 30% of the population for voting has seldom exceeded 60% and of that the ruling party's support has been 45% or less.

The implications are clear. Popular votes just do not get reflected in the number of seats won or lost. This also means that, in the overall context of the country, the so-called waves either in favour of Mrs Indira Gandhi or against her are a matter of a few percentage points. The speed of the wind of change can be exaggerated. The situation in particular regions, however, might vary. When Mrs Gandhi's party was unceremoniously dismissed from power, the swing in North India was decisive, in some places the popular votes cast exceeded 65%. And when the Janata Party and such parties as once belonged to it were equally unceremoniously rejected by voters, the swing in some States was more pronounced than in 1977, though not in the percentages of votes actually polled.

**T**he failure of the evolution of the two-party system at the Centre, however, is creating politics of its own kind. When in power, the regional parties try to coexist with the Central Government of the day, irrespective of ideology or complexion. This is true as much of Punjab, as of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal and Sikkim. Constitutional provisions, in particular the sweeping powers given to the Centre to take over the administration of a State (and its blatant misuse) and wide financial powers, of loans and grants, tend to discipline State Governments, which would think twice before unnecessarily annoying the Centre. But when not in power, and to an extent even when in power, the regional parties must cater to regional aspirations and try to blame

the Centre for all their shortcomings.

If the so-called national parties admit defeat at the central level, and start concentrating on regional parties they cannot but pander to parochial demands. This will have a profound impact on the country's politics. Without active opposition at the national level, the ruling party will tend to be more authoritarian than it already is, but will face ambush war, as it were, in the States. Secondly, while the ruling party must necessarily keep talking of national integration or foreign policy objectives, the other parties will concentrate on such regional issues as division of U.P., expulsion of 'foreign elements' or creation of new States. This dichotomy in national thinking (liberty, equality and justice) and behaviour (appeal to caste and other narrow factors at the time of elections) will get further accentuated.

**T**he political prospects, therefore, are by no means bright. Parliamentary democracy will either survive in this country or it will not survive. But if it does the failure of a national alternative to emerge will cost us dear. It is good neither for the ruling party nor for the Opposition. It makes nonsense of the delicately balanced Constitutional provisions and sets at naught all those assumptions on which the Constitution was founded.

The obvious answer to the political disequilibrium is electoral reform. Proportional representation will reflect the popular will better than the present system. But the pity is that even the Janata Party, when in power, was not enamoured of electoral change. And Mrs Gandhi sees no reason why with her massive majority at the Centre and most of the States, she should throw away her powers and influence by introducing electoral reform.

Right now, the political destiny of this nation appears to depend on the state of health or mind of one individual. But, in a democracy, an individual, however powerful, cannot singly infuse life into the country and give it shape and content. Where is the grass-root organization? Where is a dedicated and honest bureau-

cracy? Where are regional politicians who, because of their own following, can hold their own against the central leadership, as Dr B.C. Roy and Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant were able to do during Nehru's Prime Ministership?

**T**here comes perhaps a time in a nation's history when events overtake men. Chandra Shekhar is not far wrong in suggesting that we are inexorably proceeding towards the crater of the volcano and a spark may spell ruin. What kind of ruin? A nation is not destroyed simply because a system and the men trying to work it have failed. Jayaprakash Narayan had the right perspective when he told this writer shortly before his death that he had immense faith in the Indian people and that parliamentary democracy might fail but the nation would survive. In what shape is the question.

All in all, it is reasonably clear that there is disenchantment all round with the present political and judicial process. However, a society in which the majority believes in a particular value system but where the minority is free to air its dissent is a free society, in the true sense of the term, but a society in which the majority has lost faith, if it ever had, in the major premises on which it is based can neither be free nor enduring, unless people consciously think of an alternative.

A coalition or national government which would draw on the nation's talent would seem to be the need of the hour. There is no dearth of talent, particularly outside the political parties. It is for Mrs Gandhi to give the lead and for the nation to respond to it.

The principal task of such a government would be to rerail the country on the democratic track, which got out of alignment substantially because of the Sanjay phenomenon, to apply seriously to the nation's tasks, in particular to try to alleviate the sufferings of the people. Some of the problems such as imported inflation seem almost beyond our control, but then it is better to be seen to be making an honest effort rather than watching the problems get larger and larger.



# Eradicating mass poverty

RAJ KRISHNA

MODERN India has the dismal distinction of carrying the largest single national mass of poverty 309 million or about 49 per cent of the population in 1977-78. It is easily the biggest magnitude of deprivation recorded in historical time and geographical space. (Only China could possibly have a larger mass, but the Chinese can be either supposed to have eliminated it through their unique commune system, or to have avoided measuring it by not having nation wide consumption surveys of the Indian type).

The Indian poverty population alone constituted 43 per cent of the total poverty population of a group of 36 severely poverty stricken countries of the world in 1975.

The poor people in India (309 million in 1977-78) have been counted as those who did not even have Rs. 2.16 to spend per capita per day in the rural areas and Rs. 2.5 in the urban areas in the prices of 1977-78. This means that a large proportion of them could not buy the minimum necessary calories of food,



or else they could just buy the calories but nothing else!

Since the poverty ratio (about 50 per cent) has shown no significant upward or downward trend for at least 20 years, for which we have data, the total number of poor people has been *increasing by at least 5 million a year* due to population growth alone. There could hardly be a more telling proof of the utter futility of Indian development policy over the last three decades.

Besides poverty, India also has the largest single national pool of unemployment — about 20 million person-years in 1978. Perhaps, India ranks miserably in respect of almost all indicators of welfare which are not reflected in private consumption expenditure. Thus, for instance, India's adult literacy rate (36 per cent) ranks as low as 75th from the top in a list of 102 countries. Her rank is 84th from the top with regard to the percentage of people having access to safe drinking water (33) among 112 countries. Life expectancy at birth in India (51 years) is less than it is in 89 countries in a list of 125 countries. In the same list the child mortality rate (28) for India (age 1-4 years) is higher than for 76 other countries. Also, India ranks very low in the matter of people's access to electricity, transport, medical services, housing and sanitation, and very high in the scale of the incidence of mass diseases.

How India alone managed to accumulate such unprecedented, unsurpassed and all embracing human suffering over centuries must remain a mystery for our historians to unravel.

**F**or the contemporary economist the only operational question is whether this material suffering can be eradicated. The answer is, unequivocally, yes — and in less than 10 to 15 years. For, given her vast natural resources, human resources (including a large pool of technical personnel), and financial resources (with the gross saving rate approximating 22 per cent) India has all the objective means of eradicating poverty. We also have today the knowledge and field experience of many alternative approaches to the reduction of poverty and unemploy-

ment on a substantial scale. Poverty will have to be attacked in India by direct measures, because the weak multipliers of growth alone can never absorb the vast Indian labour surplus nor raise hundreds of millions of poor people above the poverty-line.

Our growth record itself is unspeakably depressing, for as many as 90 (out of 121) countries had a higher rate of growth of GNP per capita than the Indian rate during 1960-77 (1.4 per cent per year). The growth rate too can and must be doubled. For, the trickle-down effects of high overall growth are important, though not sufficient to reduce mass poverty, and high growth gives us the material and fiscal means to attack poverty directly.

Since the requisites of high growth have been considered elsewhere (see *Seminar*, January 1980) it is necessary to focus here mainly on the most promising anti-poverty programmes.

**T**he foremost of these is the programme of accelerated irrigation development (2.5 million hectares per year) and fertiliser promotion. This programme not only enhances food security but also increases rural labour absorption directly by at least 0.44 million person-years per year (An irrigated-fertilised hectare requires on the average 122 person-days of labour or 48 days more than a dry hectare.) But it is necessary to ensure that small/marginal farmers get their due share of new canal water, pump-sets and fertiliser supply.

The second promising scheme is the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) of Maharashtra which now generates 160 to 180 million person-days of employment (or 5½ to 6 hundred thousand person-years of 300 days each) for the poorest rural people at a minimum wage. More than 80 per cent of the EGS budget is now spent on productive irrigation, conservation and afforestation works. For these works shelves of blueprints are being increasingly prepared and kept at the district level in advance on the basis of technical surveys.

The EGS approach is the most important single means of eradicat-

ing poverty; and EGS-type schemes can and must be extended in phases to all parts of the country, and particularly to the high-poverty belts in the shortest possible time. For, it is only under the EGS philosophy that the State accepts the moral, legal, technical, financial and organizational responsibility to provide guaranteed employment at poverty-line income to the poor within a definite time period. The work provided can all be directly or indirectly productive if strong, technoeconomic project formulation bureaux are located in all districts/blocks. And the present unemployment can all be absorbed with an outlay of about Rs 3500 crores a year which is less than one-fourth of the annual plan outlay.

**F**or promoting self-employment the *antyodaya* approach of the State of Rajasthan is the most promising. Under this scheme within 2 years, 1.6 lakhs poorest families were delivered income-yielding assets (pumps, dairy animals, goats, sheep, bullock carts, camel carts, looms, sewing machines, retailing equipment etc.). This approach can be integrated in any area-development scheme, and adopted by all lending agencies.

Three other promising schemes are the Small Farmer Development (SFDA) scheme, the food-for-work programme and Operation Flood. Under the SFDA scheme 6 million small/marginal farmers have received loans (assets) on a preferential basis, and in many districts, where the schemes are well-administered, hundreds of thousands of small farmers have risen up to the poverty-line. The administration of this scheme needs to be improved in many respects but it must be expanded to cover 4 million additional farmers every year so that in 10 years or so the whole small/marginal farm sector is covered.

The food-for-work programme generates at least one person-year of employment per ton of grain, though official claims are higher. This norm implies that the utilisation of about 2 million tonnes in 1979-80 would have generated 2 million person-years of employment. Even in normal years this programme can be kept at



the level of 4 million tonnes, for a government grain stock of 16 million tonnes is adequate, in drought-years the level can be raised. Thus this programme can be a substantial employment-generator. At the same time it releases the credit locked up in excess food storage, it helps create (or restore damaged) rural/public assets; and it improves the food intake of the poorest directly. Indirectly it sets an effective floor to the rural wage rate, and is the best cheap food supply system for the landless, a counterpart of the urban subsidised food supply system.

The famous dairy scheme, Flood II, which has been a proven success in Gujarat and Rajasthan States is now programmed to cover 4 million milk producing families by 1978-79 and 10 million by 1985-86. The covered families, with a minimum land base, have been able to rise to the poverty line within 3 years.

These 6 schemes together have the potential of generating about 5 million personyears of employment every year at incomes above the poverty line, besides the employment which other labour intensive sectoral programmes (fishing, forestry, small industry and minimum needs) may create.

Employment generation of this order can absorb almost the whole annual addition to the rural labour force. The minimum needs programme in particular is vitally important for the reduction of mass poverty because (a) its construction component (the construction of roads, schools, dispensaries, houses for the poor, water supply and sanitation systems and electricity transmission systems) has enormous employment potential, (b) it creates the basic infrastructure without which no agricultural/industrial growth is possible in the poverty-stricken areas, and (c) it brings basic health and education facilities to the poor.

In the revised 6th Plan document (1979), the objectives set down were to provide a safe water supply system to all villages, to provide access roads to all villages with a population of 1000 or more, and to provide electricity connections to 50 per cent of all villages by 1988. In addition,

all adults in the age group 15-35 and all children in the age group 6-14 were to be brought into the appropriate educational stream by 1988. Other targets to be achieved by 1988 were a primary health centre for every 50,000 people; a sub-centre for every 5000 people, a community health worker for every 1000 people, housing aid for all landless labour families, environmental upgradation of all urban slums, and protective nutrition for children, pregnant women and nursing mothers.

More than half of the coverage under all these items was to be accomplished by 1983 with an outlay of Rs 4770 crores. It is a matter of the utmost importance that in any further revisions of the Plan these minimum infrastructure targets and outlays are not cut down.

Although successive governments in most States show a steadily decreasing interest in land reform, it remains the prime pre-requisite for the success of any anti-poverty policy in the most reactionary and densely populated regions. Recent developments in this field in Kerala, Karnataka and West Bengal show that wilfully progressive governments *can* implement land reforms successfully and create the basic conditions for the success of other programmes.

In fact, neither land reform nor any of the other programmes discussed above will fully benefit the poor unless the poor are universally politicised and unionised by political and social workers in the shortest possible time. Our polity has simply failed to throw up, in most parts of the country, governments which are knowledgeable or sincere enough to implement anti-poverty policies.

Therefore, a fateful question mark remains. Technically and financially the complete eradication of mass poverty in India in 10 to 15 years is fully feasible. But it will remain politically impossible until the political system is reformed from above, and pressurised from below, to produce not governments consisting of reactionary morons and hypocrites, and an army of parasitic babus, but governments and managements which are highly knowledgeable and sincere to the cause of the poor.



# The raw essentials

ROMESH THAPAR

AT the outset, I want to state with all the emphasis possible that the economic and political crisis India is facing has become a continuing crisis because we fail to see how different it is from previous dislocations. It is qualitatively a fundamental crisis of the entire system and will not submit to patchwork treatment or dynamic posturing at the highest levels of power. Let me spell it out for you in its rawest essentials, those essentials which are invariably covered up in statistical confusions.

*Economically*, the impressive advance of thirty years, which was to dissolve the vicious patterns of poverty in our land, has floundered and is today suffocated by the monopoly of some fifty dominant business houses who alone can manipulate for profit — and not real growth! — the jungle of rules, regulations and licenses. These are held together by an organised web of corruption which, again, serves the interests of the established business houses. New entrants are either subservient to the old or — and this is important — have work-

ed up a political base for taking a slice of the cake. In short, the economic model on which we have worked has exhausted itself.

*Politically*, there is a parallel disarray. The party system, upon which democratic functioning is based, has collapsed in terms of programmatic commitments and disciplines. The politician seeks a formation which can ensure him electoral success through whatever means are available. Electoral success means power and influence to some degree, and these in turn strengthen the economic claims of family, clan and tribe. But the need is for an alternative structuring of a democratic, participative political system. The continuing failure to provide a visible alternative pushes a desperate people in the direction of the competing authoritarianisms of Right and Left. The politically aroused people know that the States are too large, the Centre is too powerful, and the pillars of mediation and decision-making — the administration, the judiciary and the press — are in terrible



disrepair The search for solutions yields no results.

*Socially*, there has been a total failure to texture a just and humane society capable of taking care of some 1000 million people Imitative models, rooted in free enterprise and socialist environments, compete for attention and are projected with all the familiar techniques of populist politics Despite extensive research and study into the Indian condition, no coherent plan of humanised growth has emerged So-called 'development', with all its mechanical, scientific and technological norms, has become the breeding ground of problems which overwhelm the partial solutions we evolve In the process, the social polarisations are now more open and more sensitive than ever before

**A**gainst this background, roughly sketched, the people are in their own way trying to assist the emergence of effective government We have witnessed three massive mandates — in 1971, in 1977 and now in 1980 The mandates have been given despite deep divisions and split voting, but the effect on governance has been startlingly negative — startlingly, because we are refusing to accept the total crisis of the economic and political system

\* In 1971, after the droughts, actions like the nationalisation of banks and the abolition of privy purses created the hope that Indira Gandhi would be the instrument of change The rise of Bangladesh seemed to confirm this But what followed? Legal tangles over election malpractices, runaway inflation destroying years of planned growth, a massive involvement of government in the scandals around the Maruti car project of the Prime Minister's son, and the mounting confrontation with industrial labour leading to the railway strike and its rather vicious aftermath When the national crisis fused with the crisis of the ruling family, the Emergency and its aberrations were a natural outcome

\* In 1977, the revulsion in the North against the brutal excesses of the Emergency brought about the debacle of Indira Gandhi and the Congress Party An almost qualita-

tive change occurred in the assertion of caste alliances and rural interests through the amalgam of Opposition parties known as the Janata But the new party was no party at all Daily battling in the top echelons of leadership, despite the fairly remarkable corrective policies which began to be implemented in favour of the village, took a heavy toll of the Janata Party's credibility In this situation, interestingly, Indira Gandhi remained isolated — at least, until the physical break-up of the Janata Party gave her the opportunity to attempt a return to power

\* In 1980, desperate to find an alternative and seeking effective governance at the Centre, a deeply divided people again produced a massive mandate for Mrs Gandhi and her so-called 'Indira Congress'. In the new situation, apart from the prancing around of those elements which have entered politics from middle-class drop-outs, from the underworld of crime and smuggling, and through the use of black money made in business or on the periphery of wheeler-dealer politics, the crisis engulfing the political and economic system remains unresolved Caretaker governments have given way to undertaker governments The rumble from Assam and the North-East, together with the growing consolidation of communist bases in Bengal and Kerala, are highlighting new catalytic elements in a familiar situation which can only be ignored at our own peril

**I**ndia is desperate to get out of the kind of political dog-fight into which it has been projected by the events of the past ten years. There is a massive desire to move forward economically and socially, to dissolve the memories of insecurity and poverty, and to modernise in dignity. Significantly, the economic muscle and political experience now exist to carry out this transformation The effort of the past 30 odd years, has made us the seventh industrial nation of the world, even though the World Bank's per capita calculations relegate us to 'The Fourth World', whatever that may be

The effort to compare the growth rates of a complex continental polity like India with those of Singapore,

Hong Kong and Taiwan is so ludicrous that I will not waste time on the subject The relevant point for me is that the two populous worlds of India and China, freed in the forties from the thralldom of imperialism, have in the course of thirty years made themselves largely independent of the world — India in a fumbling, free-wheeling, unequal, democratic sort of way and China in a more organised, authoritarian, rigid, egalitarian framework The two varying models of growth and modernisation, influenced by the remarkably parallel thinking of Gandhi and Mao, have undergone many mutations in implementation, but they have both stressed the rather unique challenges faced by what constitutes a majority of humanity. While, globally, political and economic thinking has run into cliché channels, the effort does continue in India and China to evolve new models of human upliftment and advance So long as this effort persists, and we are able to distinguish between creative and mechanical imitation, the possibility remains that we will texture relevant societies for the future

**H**ow do you texture models of growth for a population of 1000 million and more? Is the western industrial-scientific-technological dimension adequate to meet the challenges such societies pose in an age that does not allow the appropriation of surpluses from external exploitation? Is the much sought after consumer society, and its many aberrations which influence and condition the patterns of western development in transport, housing and health, viable in situations like ours? If not, can there be several levels of living on our planet without causing grave tension and disorder? Are we moving towards a global corrective on waste and want? And is it possible for a continental world like ours to lead the way in economics, politics and social organisation?

These questions are closely interwoven as we enter the eighties No longer are the affluent nations so sure of their battered and faltering model of growth. As for the so-called developing world, despite the attractions of affluence, the hard fact is beginning to register that a less wasteful, increasingly austere, model of growth



will have to be evolved if we are to advance in dignity, and not as the well-paid cup-bearers of the affluent world. Our model of growth, in other words, will have to buttress the natural and traditional self-reliance of the people living in the countryside, designing industrial, scientific and technological inputs to strengthen this self-reliance, not to replace it or destroy it as has been done in the so-called developed societies of the world.

This must become a critical element in our understanding of the fateful years of the eighties. We must not become the victims of distant, giant, monolithic complexes which can hold us to ransom, having already destroyed our capacity to function in self-reliance. If we have to evolve plan programmes which modernise our societies, then let them be only through inputs which cannot be organised locally or individually — transport, electricity, water, banking, marketing etc., etc. It is this kind of break with the past that needs to be made. The peoples supposedly in advance of us have to begin the slow recovery of the elements of self-reliance in their societies and to dissolve their giant infrastructures which threaten to paralyse them. This is perhaps the core of the crisis humanity is facing. The inability democratically to tackle the crisis is rooted in a *status quo* political and economic framework which we refuse to change. A drastic restructuring of the framework alone can provide the basis for an alternative which will make sense to people the world over.

**T**he crisis is sharpest in a complex, continental land like India. I want to sketch the kind of perspectives we have to put before ourselves if we want to get moving out of the petrified jungle of mixed-up priorities, indecision and paralysis. The task of establishing a democratic frame is very much more difficult and tortuous than the setting up of the brutalised authoritarian models now being touted around under various labels. Such a democratic frame must crystallise the political will to end poverty, to establish social security and well-being in a truly just society, continental in scale and invariably embracing many centuries at a given moment in time.

Let me detail only some of the dimensions of the new frame within which we will have to act.

\* Our very young democracy is too fragile and simplistic to cope with the conflicting and inter-locked articulations of our many castes, classes, and communities. The old dominating influences have cracked, leaving gaping vacuums. The political/economic system has not been able to adjust. Paper rights, without defined responsibilities, and populist politics at every level, have put a premium on whatever can be grabbed without reference to the total situation. Among the rich and affluent, at organised trades union level, or at the point of spontaneous action, the stress is on muscle-power, influence-peddling and money-politics. Solutions are sought in formulas which hide the erosion of all norms and disciplines of a productive society capable of functioning in some civilised unity. The glaring and persistent inequalities between caste, classes and communities heighten the trauma of democratic functioning.

\* This continental polity is sharply divided between well-organised urban populations and neglected, depressed rural folk to whom the town is becoming a Mecca. In other words, a twenty per cent of the population is rapidly absorbing the limited resources available and living off cheap food supplied by the peasantry. The pattern has in relative terms changed little over thirty years of freedom. Today, the five hundred thousand villages of India lack the purchasing power to create the demands upon which future industrial growth will largely depend. A massive market of some 700 millions is being artificially curbed around middle class ambitions, and there is every possibility that migrating populations from the rural areas will overwhelm the towns. There is grave danger that the political and economic process will be distorted if this situation is allowed to persist — and with heavy damage to the concept of an equal and just society. Major steps have to be taken, particularly in our populous land, to integrate the urban-rural landscape. It calls for profound changes in our thinking and our growth scenarios for the future.

\* The very size of India, a world on its own, demanded careful central guidance in the early years of our bruised and splintered freedom. This represented a certain continuity from the days of British rulership — distant, centralised, hierarchical, imperial. With the economic growth of the regions, and the rise of newly motivated communities capable of handling their own very special problems, the federal structure — which very early recognised the complexity of India's multi-ethnic character — is now under pressure to decentralise effective power through transferring the bulk of day-to-day decision-making and implementation. Again, fears arise about the implications of decentralisation on the unity of India. We fail to realise how economic growth has cemented the far-flung corners of the sub-continent, made regions interdependent, and how this growth itself demands the dignity that decentralisation bestows on the regions. History teaches us many lessons in this respect, but we ourselves have been in the early years of freedom an advanced experimental ground for continental initiative and achievement based on the techniques of consensus policy-making. Today, more than ever, political and economic management cannot be effective India-wide unless it is decentralised and open to as much participation as is possible to arrange. Any attempt now to resist this qualitative change in political and economic relationships between the Centre and the States will only entrench the *status quo* and its non-performance. This inevitably prepares the way to a polarisation between the two forces which put their faith in centralised direction — the authoritarian Right and the authoritarian Left. If the humane, moderate Centre, fighting for a just society, is to survive it must live with the problems of decentralisation, work out their many facets and implement them with courage. There can be no faltering.

\* In the context of this extraordinary maze of problems facing us, we have to shake ourselves free of our *status quoism* and espouse the cause of smaller States, some sixty odd, united in a federal polity which is committed to the democratic way because there is no other way for the Indian sub-continent. A restructuring on this scale could proceed in tension.



leading to anarchy as in Assam and the North-East, or in organised phases where demands for separate Statehood are powerfully expressed or through a second States' Reorganisation Commission. Since the transfer of power, a second India has been born. A third India is on the way within the next 25 years. The original formula of one State one language gave us monsters like Uttar Pradesh with a population of nearly 100 millions, moving to 200 millions. Five to six States could replace a single Uttar Pradesh — and to good effect. Even an artificial language like Hindi would dissolve into the spoken tongues of the region like Avadhi, Bhojpur, Maithili and Braj. It is an example of what has to be projected if we are to establish a really stable and working federal polity. Smaller States will break the power of dominant elements in the larger States, spread the benefits of planned growth more evenly and develop more meaningful relations with the Centre on specific problems.

The restructuring may well require drastic changes in the political infrastructures which usually accompany the setting up of new States — nominated governors, too large Cabinets, huge legislatures, and sprawling secretariats. These are matters for detailed and specialised study, involving a survey of the modern experience of other nations. Even the central apparatus will have to come under scrutiny, including the practise of treating the President as if he was something left behind by our British connection, a monarchical figure, an expensive rubber stamp for the Union Cabinet. That is *not* the role the Constitution envisaged for him. Indeed, the Constitution we gave ourselves, and which few of us have read, would need close study. The passion which motivated the founding fathers must be recaptured at this moment of our misery and despair.

**T**hen, there are the global powers, ever present in our calculations. The pincers of their foreign policies complicate the tackling of internal problems. This is not something we can wish away. Geographically, the Indian sub-continent is located at a strategic crossroads, and in the eighties it is going to be compelled

to assume the global postures in its own foreign policy which it has until now evaded. Our first decades of freedom were concerned largely with the consolidation of our frontiers and the defusing of cold war tensions which might have turned us into the battleground of hostile blocs of powers. It is my view that the postures of the non-aligned in the new situation are fast becoming irrelevant. The job now is to confront directly the armaments industry which under the cover of patriotic slogans and conspiratorial agencies creates a continuing basis for international tension and war. The bill for these games has now crossed 5000 billion dollars a year. Such a confrontation is in the interest of genuine non-aligned nations, and will salvage the awesome resources which alone can bring our world to some level of healthy survival.

**T**he Indian experience of the sixties and seventies should motivate us to become the main advocates of the assault on the armaments industry. Since our border troubles with China, exaggerated by both sides into supposedly 'sacred' crusades, we have burnt in so-called defence our entire economic surplus. The Bangladesh crisis marked another qualitative change in defence spending, even rocking the price stability which had characterised our planning processes. And, now, after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and Pakistan's firm commitment to detonate what is called an 'Islamic' atomic device, we can expect a further escalation in defence spending — covering, may be, nuclear technologies! Despite all our efforts to produce the military hardware within India — and there is inevitable waste in this, for ordnance factories seldom work to more than twenty five per cent of their capacities during peace time! — we are for ever being pushed to purchase military technologies which supposedly give us that vital 'edge' over potential enemies. The recent Jaguar commitment is illustrative of the helplessness of developing nations in this game of armaments.

Viewing the prospects in the eighties, it is clear that the international situation is likely to undergo profound mutations. In our region, India will probably find herself

closely involved in the spreading struggle between the Soviet Union and China for hegemonies and spheres of influence. Our entire Western, Northern and Eastern borders will become sensitive. If we embark on a compensating arms build-up in the traditional sense of the term, then our people will never be able to generate the resources to transform their economic condition. The only way it can be done is to evolve a regional *detente*, and a defence system based (if need be!) upon the hitting power of an organised and armed people, putting its faith in the unlikelihood of massive confrontations with our neighbours. Of course, much will depend on our diplomacy — and, let us not forget, the health of our internal situation.

So, we return to the gut problems of evolving a continental consensus around political and economic policies. This consensus has so far evaded us because we continue to tinker with the critical issues. In the eighties, whoever takes hold of these issues and grapples with them, determined to achieve a new framework of action, will lead this land of complexity and creativity. But if we keep thinking, waiting for a magic touch, we will go down in chaos.

**L**et me try to sketch very briefly what I mean when I speak of leadership in the eighties.

1. Before movements of an ethnic nature have a chance to paralyse the life and activity of a region, we should be able to order a restructuring of States in that region to reassure the ethnic minorities.

2. The absence of a national language rooted in the linguistic plurality of the sub-continent is beginning to clog the mind of our people. The stress on mother tongues in their own scripts, which ensures the real creativity of our people, must be backed by a compulsory national language — call it Hindustani or Bharati or what you will — composed of the words used in normal parlance but written in the Roman script. Why? This alone ensures an equal linguistic burden on all our peoples and, through the script, provides our linkage with the languages of the world, now the vehicles of modern sciences and



technologies A phonetic Hindi, based on Devanagari, creates second class citizens of those who are compelled to speak someone else's mother tongue The obsession with Hindi that is the mother tongue of the Indo-Gangetic plain — and that, too, only if we forget its real flavour in Avadhi, Maithili, Bhojpuri and Braj — must be confronted

3. When every political party is going to enjoy some kind of power base in some part of the sub-continent, the decentralisation of the political/economic system must become a major undertaking We cannot afford to wait until the entire edifice of governance lies in ruins Early perception of the need for change is an essential element of political and economic management in a country like India. Every genuine effort to strengthen federal functioning, and to curb the tendency to use the Centre for flatts of various kind, has brought immense dividends and will continue to do so Contrary to present trends, which seek to give the entire sub-continent a single political coloration, we will have to see the wisdom of various parties co-existing, united by a responsive federal Centre There can be no other perspective for India.

4 Parallel to this effort, centres of genuine autonomy have to be established in the public sector to reinforce the democratic processes and to restore a feeling of dignity and responsibility to those entrusted with leading positions in the drive to develop resources and to modernise This covers both industrial units and centres of cultural study and communication, including All India Radio and Doordarshan Autonomise and decentralise boldly Political interference and blackmail at every level of functioning has shattered morale, and particularly in the institutions which cement democratic life and give it the productive momentums so vital for survival Autonomy and decentralised functioning provide the essence of the participative democratic system we have to establish, and yet so little attention is given to these facets of our life. Insulation from political interference is a major task before us, and at this moment carefully ignored by every political formation.

5 We will have to realise pretty soon that the tolerance of raw poverty, particularly in the villages of India, narrows democratic options and creates the kind of impatience which seeks violent and short-cut solutions In the rural areas, we long ago came to the conclusion that a land-to-the-tiller movement would disrupt Indian agriculture and uproot millions in a massive dislocation of food and other essential supplies For this reason, a policy of ceilings on agricultural holdings was resorted to — and also agricultural wages were fixed. Yet, at both these crucial points in the rural sector, there is massive evasion encouraged by political patrons The mere carrying out of rural legislation passed years ago in the State assemblies would have a profound and economically transforming effect. Legislation which seeks to regulate, but allows default, does widespread damage to the just society because it creates malpractices which are difficult to handle as the years go by Here is a revolution of implementation waiting to be carried out

6 We have to commit ourselves to a re-designing of the public sector now dominant in our economy, so that it is efficient, productive and competitive — indeed competitive within itself It sounds like a mouthful, but there is no alternative in an over-populated land of grim social contrasts, contrasts which only become sharper with growth which is ill-conceived and too much at the mercy of manipulators, speculators and fixers. We must ensure that the massive savings and investments of 30 years are not destroyed, that at the same time the public sector does not encroach into areas for which it is unfitted, that the megalomania of giant bureaucratised monoliths — steel, coal, railways, insurance, State trading, heavy engineering — is checked, that optimum size units suited to the management skills and perspectives of our country are evolved, and marketing mechanisms are set up, particularly in the rural areas, to increase small scale productivity and with it the rural prosperity that is so essential to our future self-reliant growth These ways are certainly slower, steadier and surer because they do not disrupt traditional societies for some imitative mess.

7. A host of problems will have to be tackled with a courage that has so far been lacking—or, to put it more precisely, drowned in populist slogans We have to educate our people for jobs. Our universities cannot be swamped out by those whose ambition is clerkdom in government The vicious system of employment for life, with the obliteration of easy hiring and firing, where work is not done, has put a premium on sloth and irresponsibility Politically, when a well-organised minority holds the majority to ransom, the democratic frame is already in danger And such minorities can be made up of affluent businessmen, newly-rich middlemen, the labour aristocracy and mafias of all kinds Over the past decade, this pattern has evolved with surprising suddenness in India It will have to be stamped out by citizens who refuse to be fuddled by phoney slogans serving the ends of authoritarianism This aspect of our life is covered over in the rhetoric and mumbo-jumbo of both Right and Left theoreticians The democratic way is impossible in extreme equations It has to be based on consensus actions rooted in the desire to end the poverty of our people A refusal to see this is a surrender to authoritarianism, authoritarianism under which this fragile federation of so many cultures, conflicts and fusions can never survive This lesson has to be driven home in our political life of the eighties

8 As we confront the monster of populism, we will realise what rumination has visited the vital population control programmes by the crazy compulsion brought to the fore during the Emergency Now, after the 1977 election, the populist politician, himself evading control measures, imagines that the people of India are against population control This nonsense is peddled at the highest levels of policy-making No effort is made to understand the real mood which is in support of control measures but in conditions conducive to persuasion and after-care We treat our people as if they were cattle. Either the fascistic rounding up of men and women for forcible vasectomy and tubectomy or nothing We have to realise that in this area we need to mobilise our finest talent to make the programme a success on a



voluntary basis. The false Left plea that 'development is the best contraceptive' must also be buried. It is a worthless, populist slogan, rejected even in countries like China. India must move to a zero rate of population growth. There is no other way to salvage the lives of our tormented and traumatised people.

9. There are other problems, too, — the problems of Harijans, Adivasis and religious minorities, the problems of women and children, the problems of health and the problems mentioned earlier of evolving a security system for the sub continent which does not exhaust its resources for genuine development. All these are linked to the task of texturing a humane society. But it is not my intention to attempt a cataloguing of problems in the style of the Planning Commission. I believe that in the eighties we must take hold of certain key questions which are tying us up in a web of confusion and cut through to action. Priorities are of vital importance, and leadership will be judged on its selection of these priorities. Too often we miss the essentials and are carried forward on irrelevant impulses. This tendency has to be powerfully corrected.

It is difficult to maintain a clear focus in so wide a survey as the challenge of the eighties. Building the natural disciplines of the civilised humane way of living involves so many facets of activity, but these disciplines need constant attention or else there is danger that the people take to disastrous, simplistic solutions. Already, the democratic centre of our political life is in disarray. A scenario of confrontation between the extreme Right and the extreme Left is possible with all its dangers to the unity of the unique world that is India. Is it possible for our disrupted and despoiled society to salvage itself within the next decade or so? It is a revolutionary task. I believe it can be done — that is if we begin to work a new model, step by step, and refuse to be taken for a ride.

In other words, we need a new and purposeful rallying of our people to build the India we want — a new formation for action. And that is the central challenge of the eighties.



# Books

## ECONOMIC STRATEGY FOR THE 80s by L.K. Jha Jha Allied Publishers, 1980

THE deteriorating economic situation of the country and the difficult time lying ahead has led L. K. Jha to suggest the economic strategy for the present decade. He summarises beautifully the exact present situation. 'What we are passing through, in effect, is not just a bad patch in economic progress but a deeper social, political and moral malaise, the seeds of which lie in the malfunctioning of the economic system as a whole' The large gap between plan and performance has led the people to doubt the utility of the planning process. Indeed, the very quality of individual and national life is in jeopardy. Therefore, the situation is to be looked at afresh.

Planning in the past has not been without achievements specially in agriculture, foreign exchange reserves and in the average life expectation of citizens. But, failures have outnumbered the relatively few successes, and the Planning Commission is largely responsible for this. It provided plans larger than the resources, underestimated real costs of projects and reduced unjustifiably non-plan outlays when crises arose. But, the author is right in saying that the overall industrial development in the first three plans proceeded faster than many had expected. Since the mid 60s, constraints started developing and a wrong set of remedies was chosen. Some policies were successful, but the overall situation was bleak.

Management also cannot escape a large share in the non and wrong implementation of plans. To improve it, management should be professionalised, and adequately trained and equipped. Jha favours the revival of the pool system (Finance and Commerce pool) with the difference that members would also manage State public sector undertakings. Procedures require to be made simpler and speedier. Decentralisation should be brought about and the proportion of cases going to ministers greatly reduced. But the point lost sight of by the author is that ministers are directly accountable to Parliament even in small matters.

The role of the secretariat should be confined to expert advice and assistance in framing policies. This would require the structure of controls to change since the public sector, to a large extent, has been the sufferer. 'What our system of controls lacks fundamentally is a mechanism which would bring about positive results and not just prevent negative ones'. Greater and meaningful coordination between price and fiscal policies is called for because both have profound influence on economic activity. Inter-sectoral consistency in price policy is required.

The author's emphasis on a more vigorous approach towards resources is welcome. But in advocating the same for foreign exchange reserves, he is controversial in the wake of frequent OPEC increases in prices. To counteract this he suggests boosting exports. Here he does not lay any strategy for what products and to which countries to export to, since developed countries are increasingly following protec-



tionist policies. Here Khusro's concept of 'dynamic comparative advantage' and increasing trade with UDCs can be applied.

The performance of the public sector can improve, firstly, by erasing the 'aura of vagueness about its aims'. Broad parameters should be laid down for them to function in. Secondly, management should be subjected to minimum interference. Performance should, no doubt, be monitored, but deficiencies brought out should be promptly corrected.

Jha falls heavily on the personnel policy of the government. He takes an extremist view in criticising the bureaucracy which is surprising in the light of himself being an able civil servant for more than three decades. He does not deal with the innumerable constraints that the administrative machinery has to face while performing its duties. Political pressures is one of these.

'Growth should be accompanied by social justice'. The tax burden is too high and has been imposed on commodities indiscriminately. Taxes on inputs have resulted in cascading effect on costs and prices which have been further escalated. High rate of deficit financing has added fuel to the fire. This has invited the hostility of the public. Even though taxes are progressive, but considering the large-scale evasion and agriculture being outside the purview of direct tax and also the large share of indirect taxes in the total tax revenue, taxes seem to be highly regressive. This point seems to have been lost sight of. Therefore, we are confronted with a low level of effective demand and highly skewed distribution of income.

Incentives and concessions should be used to stimulate the small-scale sector with considerations to the quality of the product. Agricultural taxation is not explicitly mentioned by the author, but it is the need of the day.

Wrong policies and priorities have added to the suffering. Industrial licensing and import substitution are some of them. Emphasis on the latter has led to considerable neglect of the development of the consumer goods industries and was regulated by the former. Increases in demand were not correctly foreseen, and since the licensing policy did not allow for excess capacity, it could not be used at the right time. Even the installed capacity was underutilised (50% at present).

Jha is supportive of the strategy chosen at the beginning of the planning era but now emphasises consumer industries development, and very rightly. Fixed income groups should be sympathised with and improving their situation should be given allocative priority. Further suggestions for the priorities of different income groups are put forward in a very convincing manner which seem to correspond to the situation. Dual pricing should be undertaken only if the requirements for doing so are fully met, otherwise another blunder as in the case of sugar will come up.

If past experience is any guide, price stability needs utmost attention, because price rises have frequently

interrupted the pace of growth. Solutions for guarding against inflation should be ours and not those of the developed countries, since conditions in the two differ widely. Monetary expansion is to be paid special attention. Investment should be made selective so that economic growth does not suffer. Supplies of goods should be increased by any method, since inflation is mainly due to decreases in supply. Import policy regarding a particular commodity (whose high prices serve vested interests) should be made liberal. Foreign exchange rates can be effectively used according to the situations. The public distribution system should be made an integral part of the trading system and vastly improved. Jha summarises the various steps — 'instead of allowing inflation to disrupt the growth effort we should orient our growth process to provide immunity against inflation'.

Unemployment is the greatest of all problems being faced now. It, like inflation, afflicts all but the few. Jha gauges the situation correctly when he says, 'Unless we evolve and adopt a strategy to reverse this rising tide and absorb the energies and fulfill the hopes of young men and women striving to make a living for themselves, our whole development effort — whatever the rate of growth or surplus of foreign exchange or foodgrains we build up, may collapse under mounting frustration'. Gainful employment is the goal. It should become an integral part of the overall economic policy. Here, again, tax policies are to be modified because any concession in excise etc., to labour intensive industries are out-balanced by other taxes in the same budget.

The author makes a very fine and comprehensive analysis of the Keynesian approach to unemployment and compares it with India. He concludes that we need an adaptation and not adoption of the Keynesian approach. Export demand is to be harnessed and we have to be highly opportunistic in this respect. Jha suggests an expansion of the judiciary to gainfully employ a large number of people specially the tide of unemployed law graduates. To cover costs, court fees etc., can be raised. Housing is another sector for exploitation. Scope of food-for-work programme is to be enlarged. Marketing, employment oriented controls, are other possible remedies.

Development levels are measured by the level of productivity which depends upon the type of technology being used. What technology to adopt is a matter of personal opinion. The author favours a modern technological approach so far as it results in the launching of new products. We have to strive for an intermediate solution between the two extremes of traditional and modern technology. Traditional technology has to be updated so as to result in less waste and improved quality. Application of the type of technology should be highly selective and concomitant with the conditions prevailing in the country. Government should give a boost to research and development processes on its own initiative. The private sector should also be encouraged to do the same. Import of technology should be allowed at a liberal



scale but the last priority should be given to the import of the finished product. A flexible approach should be adopted towards multi-nationals, which should not be looked at with suspicion

This book spells out the economic strategy for the 80s Jha brings out past failures neatly, as the saying goes 'Today's expert tells us what yesterday's expert did wrong' He misses some essential points, for instance, the transport bottleneck has been given almost no significance. Similarly, many other fields where we have a high potential like tourism remain untouched in the strategy There is need to make people more 'development conscious' and any attempt to break the equilibrium of poverty should be welcomed Suppressing this attempt should be seriously curbed

**Aditya Khanna**

**INSTITUTIONS IN THE JANATA PHASE** by  
Arun Shourie Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1980

THE collapse of the political, bureaucratic, economic and press institutions in India, which only as late as the 1950s were to herald a 'new way' to the world, is old hat today All of us have sensed this, all of us have concrete examples from our daily lives that can, in their subjective ways, prove this, but few of us can remember the process, the details, the examples and the bewildering rapidity with which this has happened. Arun Shourie's collection of essays, articles and talks provides a compendium of reference and a startling distillation of the most gross facts to remind us how deep is the rot that has set in and how shallow and hypocritical are the excuses that are repetitiously bandied about as a futile cover-up This is a horrifying book It leaves no doubt that the malaise that afflicts us has caught not just the limbs of the body but its heart and soul as well. Here, within 300 pages, is the unedifying and undeniable truth of what has gone wrong with our legislatures, our courts, our administrators, our police, our press, our commissions and our spirit

Shourie's perceptions and responses are those of an intense, pessimistic and untiring observer His articles in the *Indian Express* over the last three years, reproduced in this volume, bear witness to a fierce endeavour to bring out into the open all that official and governmental efforts strive to hide The articles were shocking in their revelations when they first appeared. As a collection, carefully selected to provide a breadth of scope and coverage, they are numbing It is in fact hard to share his own conviction that publishing the facts will, somehow, awaken a sufficient popular response to mend things. For, Arun Shourie himself believes that the process of corrosion has gone too far to save even the corpse. Reading this book is, therefore, like watching armageddon enthralled by its grossness, captivated by its unrelieved horror, and resignedly awaiting one's own turn

'The liberal system is dying in India, dying of can-

cer..' That is Shourie's conclusion though it appears as the first sentence of his introduction. 'Legislatures', he writes, 'are chambers for intimidation.. courts (may) survive, but justice does not ...(the) civil servants (have) become domestic servants, always on the look-out for an opportunity by which they may serve their masters better...the police force (has) become a private army .. The legacy is certain. As is the end But the time-table is not' Nothing, he seems to say, that is being done or envisaged, can either ameliorate or cure. As he puts it. 'Will aspirin cure cancer?'

Catalogued in these articles are the shenanigans of our politicians, the 'murders' committed by our police, the flaccid weakness of our press, the connivance and demoralisation of our civil services, the manipulations and lies of our governments and the helplessness of the poor man, who has neither the time, nor the contacts, nor the money to help himself What Arun Shourie points at is going on around us all the time Witness the fate of the special courts Consider how State governments defected en masse after the January elections Contemplate the careful and deliberate transfers affected in the central and State civil services And, finally, remember Narampur and Pipra and how quickly we have forgotten them Shourie's book limits itself to the three years between 1977 and 1980 It could as easily have begun in 1970 or gone on to the present day.

Yet, the situation is not as unremediable, as incorrigible, as inevitably doomed as Shourie in his black depression would make out. At every point in this book, the source of the corrosion, though never explicitly analysed and discussed as such (and that is this book's drawback, it describes, perhaps interprets, but rarely analyses and attempts to understand), is seen to be the role, power and influence of an ever-expanding and increasingly unaccountable and irresponsible government For, it is government pressure that has cowed the courts, reduced the legislatures, demoralised the services and made a mockery of a 'free' press. The way out is surely to reduce the role of the government in the affairs and daily routine life of the country.

Individuals in India are not, despite Shourie's premonitions to the contrary, of themselves ordinarily corrupt, opportunistic and venal all the time It is ill-conceived policies and fear of government reprisal or reaction that makes them so Therefore, any increase in the spheres of freedom from government interference that can be ensured will, of itself, allow for opportunities for the development of a more healthy and encouraging spirit. This is no doubt why Shourie is so persistent in his efforts to make the ordinary man aware The question is which 'Government of India' will voluntarily, or even under pressure (and what sort of pressure?), reduce its malicious presence?

In the meantime, it is essential and paramount that every Indian become aware and disgusted with the prevailing state of affairs Arun Shourie's book deserves the widest readership it can have For, though it is not a great book, though it is not brilliantly written,



it describes and offers irreproachable evidence of the diminution that is overcoming India. And that is, of itself, a great service.

Karan Thapar

### **INDIA'S NORTH-EAST IN FLAMES by V.I.K.**

Sarin Vikas, 1980

SARIN'S exposition is a valuable contribution to the list of growing literature on the north-east. He has been correspondent of a national daily in Shillong for over a decade and is well-acquainted with the events taking place in the region and claims to sketch the issues concerning the various units of the region dispassionately. Although he begins with the advent of British rule, his work is more concerned with the contemporary trouble which has engulfed the whole of the region. His style and presentation of facts are simple, straight-forward, convincing though depicted in lurid terms such as 'Blood and Thunder', 'Dragon's Paw', 'Coils of a Python', 'Politics of Survival', 'The Gathering Storm', 'The Mizo Imbrolio', etc.

The author has full sympathies with the people of the region and has endeavoured to project their views in perspective. The publication of works of this nature is timely and urgent. It is expected that the rest of India will be enlightened with the unknown or lesser known facts about the north-east which may help in solving some of the pressing problems it faces.

The author's description of the 'geo-political ambitions' of the foreign powers and their interests in the region are well-known but ignored. Our country has yet to evolve a mechanism to meet this challenge effectively. Sarin has also revealed the pit-falls of the 1971 agreement of the Union Government with Bangladesh and brought into the lime-light the 'major-shift' of Muslim politics in Assam which has impelled the Assamese to consider the problem of foreigners much more serious than the threat of Bengali-Hindu cultural imperialism. Partly due to that, the foreigners' expulsion for the Assamese has become 'a life and death question' and they are determined to make any sacrifice to preserve their identity. His suggestions to check foreign immigration in the region fail to visualise that a rational population policy for the tiny, vulnerable States of the strategic north-east is highly essential. This sensitive area ought to be treated differently from the rest of the country in matters of inter-State migration and foreign immigration.

Sarin's advocacy for giving up the policy of 'protectionism' and instead launching 'full-blooded development that has real punch' militates against the earlier recommendations of the several commissions set up by the Union Government. It will entail an 'open-door policy' in matters of employment which may prove detrimental, for its beneficiaries are likely to be non-tribals. It will encourage further resentment and bitterness among the hill tribes of the north east. The urgent task is to bring forth an emotional integration of the people of the region and develop among them a sense of interdependence. The North-Eastern Council is best suited to perform this

task but needs liberal financial assistance from the Centre.

The author is quite correct in his assessment that the sense of alienation is far more damaging than the threat of secession, for, in his view, the Indian army can 'always quell insurrection' and, therefore, instead of the military operation, he pleads for a 'policy of accommodation' for the solution of the vexed problems of the north-east. His various suggestions to bridge the communication gap are commendable. In this, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry can play a vital role by emphasising the emotional integration of the heterogeneous elements residing in the region. The north-east urgently requires the healing touch and a sympathetic understanding of the problems faced by it. Mrs Gandhi is the only national leader who understands their mind well but her party functionaries have failed to provide a favourable condition for an early solution of the current problems confronted by the region.

I do not agree with Sarin in blaming the Centre for the present state of affairs and to criticise it for pursuing the 'policy of adhocism' without substantiating it. In fact the local-regional leaders have taken advantage of the fall of Desai's government and the consequent installation of weak and non-functioning governments both at the Centre and in the State of Assam. The new Union government is not expected to rectify things in haste and the Centre's tolerance and perseverance in the matter are really commendable and exhibit concern for the sensitivity of the people.

Sarin concludes that the 'paramount task' is to bring the people of the remote north-east into the national mainstream. This is largely true but the urgent task, on the other hand, is for the inter-State migrants living in the north-east to identify themselves with the local inhabitants and work for their welfare and uplift, which is wanting. This requires their psychological reorientation. The tribals of the north-east are also fast coming into the national mainstream but the need is to accelerate this process with tact and care.

Bhuaneshwar Narain Agrawal

### **WOMENS QUEST FOR POWER by Devaki Jain**

Vikas, 1980.

MANY an issue loses the respectability it may deserve because of excessive anxiety on the part of its promoters. Devaki Jain's book which modestly seeks only to 'provide glimpses into the perceptions of (women's) participation (in projects described) and some insights into the kind of impact the projects had on their economic and social condition' suffers at the very outset because it has to bear right through, the onerous burden of its pompous title, *Women's Quest for Power*. When seen in the context of an active attempt by women to wrest power, the efforts detailed are weak.

The main body of the book attempts to describe, in some detail, the work of five women-oriented pro-



jects spread over various parts of the country. Each description consists essentially of a narration of the project's genesis, essential modalities of its functioning, peculiarities in the operational techniques, environmental considerations and constraints, the proximate motivation factor, ending with a series of profiles on some pivotal and some representative individuals who form the working core of the group under study. Statistics have sensibly been kept to the essential minimum and wherever provided are in a simple and easily understandable tabular format.

These are exciting tales of common women banded together seeking not power, but a means of sustenance, of providing for themselves and their families an additional source of income which they desperately require. Sometimes they find in this search opportunities to express themselves more fully as individuals and awaken to a sense of equality and consequently of responsibility that the male sex has so far been burdened with.

The tales are simply told and where there seem to be heroines they are more the result of overenthusiastic authors, though the women themselves do exhibit that rare quality of courage, grit and determination for which the female sex has always been highly regarded. It is illuminating to read how, with a variety of constraints, women get together and, despite traditional reservations about the feasibility, work together in harmony, handling matters which have been for years the exclusive privilege of the male sex (like accounting).

The tales are cautionary, however, and there is the sensible rider attached to them that they are meant more in the nature of parables for inspiration rather than models for emulation. For such experiments, and some of these projects are not experiments any more, cannot ever be replicated and every society must evolve its own mechanism to provide the required relief to the down-trodden condition that their women may be in.

SEWA (Self-employed Women's Association) is the story of an organisation of working vendor women operating on the pavements of Ahmedabad city, which aims at the economic regeneration and social uplift of the working women of the poorest sections in that area. SEWA provides among other things financial assistance, health and maternity benefits and even research facilities. The milk producers of Kaira story, is actually part of a larger scheme which has already received widespread attention and is today recognised as one of the most successful experiments of cooperative work in the country.

The story of Lijjat Papad is of a fast expanding organisation that produces domestically required items in small factories wholly owned and exclusively women run with the mother organisation providing the infrastructural facilities and exercising controls that are standard features of any commercial organi-

sation while retaining a certain simplicity and sympathy that makes it a real service organisation.

The painters of Madhubani are another group that is studied and it is also a well documented story of traditional painters turned into commercial artists and yet retaining the original flavour and maintaining a domesticity that has ensured a certain continuity in their ancient life style, thanks to the women taking an active role in the kind of experimentation that has gone on.

The story of Manipur's women patrols who police their husband's proclivities to drink is not so well known. *Laikai* patrols consisting of 'women with large heads (sic) and long poles patrolling under the glow of the kerosene lantern against the pitch blackness of the by-lanes' either make drunkards pay fines or pressurise alcohol manufacturers.

Most of these stories make interesting reading and bringing them together is certainly a worthwhile venture. But Devaki Jain's introduction makes such a foray into a territory that is infinitely more complex than can be tackled on the basis of the work under review. This is where she is very vulnerable, raising expectations in the reader which are neither fulfilled nor adequately discussed.

The author is on even shakier grounds in postulating the philosophical basis for some of the ventures under study and in trying to test the hypothesis—'is income a necessary' but not sufficient condition for female emancipation. None of the stories give us clues that would either substantiate or throw out the hypothesis. And this is Devaki Jain's main shortcoming in the book. She is not able to follow through with what she begins.

Dilip Cherian

#### **NORTH-SOUTH: A PROGRAMME FOR SURVIVAL.** Pan World Affairs, London

THE Independent Commission on International Development Issues Report, popularly known as the Brandt Report, is yet another addition to the plethora of literature on the North-South dialogue and the New International Economic Order, but with a difference. The difference is that the Report is available to the public in a paperback edition titled 'North-South: A programme for Survival'. This review will however treat it as a report rather than as a book. The distinction is necessary for a report unlike a book has two aspects to it, one is the content matter and scope, while the other is its impact on the brass tacks of international relations.

The thrust of the argument is the by now established hypothesis of mutual interdependence between North-South and the corollary interdependence between issues (e.g., food and aid, trade and transnational corporations). The debate in the '60s which



revolved around 'dependence' has now changed to 'interdependence' leaving one with the sneaking suspicion that it may only be the sugar coating of a bitter pill. By emphasising cooperation as a natural phenomenon of a world economy, the Report highlights a wide range of issues whereby interdependence can or ought to result between North-South.

The tenor of the Report is set in the Introduction by Chairman Willy Brandt who categorically states that poverty and not war is the basis of chaos in the world. The abundant statistical evidence of the existing misplaced emphasis on armament is frightening. For example,

1 For the price of one jet fighter (20 million dollars) one could set up about 40,000 village pharmacies.

2 One-half of one per cent of one year's world military expenditure would pay for all the farm equipment needed to increase food production and approach self-sufficiency in food-deficit low income countries by 1980.

The list goes on ad infinitum. A similar statistical barrage is presented in evidence of interdependence throughout the Report. In this review we have picked out two areas of mutual interdependence viz, trade and industrialisation and the role of Transnational Corporations (TNCs) as examples to assess the anxieties and aspirations of 'mutual interest'. These two issues have become significant in the current debate on industrialisation in developing countries.

Trade and industrialisation is the return to the *laissez-faire* principle of free trade. The aspirations of the South are based on the possibility of industrialisation through the export of labour-intensive manufactures. 'In 1955 they made up only 10 per cent of non-fuel exports; ten years later they were 20 per cent, and in 1975 they passed 40 per cent. Most of these exports come from only a few countries, eight of them accounted for 78 per cent of the additional exports of manufactures from the Third World to the OECD countries between 1970 and 1976.'

But, the share of developing countries is only a small proportion of world trade declining from a peak of 9 per cent in 1977. The possibility of further expansion of trade from the South has been blocked by growing protectionist tendencies of the North despite GATT and MTN. The fear of the North regarding restructuring of the international division of labour stems from the fact that cheap labour from the South would displace labour in the North. At present, the fear has been fuelled by growing inflation and rising unemployment in the rich industrial nations.

The report puts to rest the fears of the North by citing numerous studies in the U.S.A., F.R.G., Britain and France which lead to the opposite conclusion that the direct impact on jobs has been small

compared to that of domestic technical progress (encouraged by pressure from imports). As the Report holds, 'A recent study on the adjustment problem in the U.K. economy showed that the increase of imports of manufactures from 23 newly industrialising countries from 1970 to 1977 is unlikely to have displaced more than 2 per cent of the 1970 labour force of the industries concerned.'

To strengthen this argument is the long-term scope for increasing exports from the North to an industrialising South, giving the North an edge. This ability to reconcile short-term (labour displacing) and long-term (growing exports) has been best solved by Japan. Japan has adopted a forward planning approach where old industries are scrapped and investment in new industries supported by the government.

Nevertheless, the more fundamental question of whether the export of labour-intensive manufactures helps to achieve the aspirations of developing countries is left unsolved. The acceptance of a one-to-one relationship and the examples of Korea and Taiwan have not been proved by other studies (Vernon, Hufbauer, et al). These studies have shown that the dynamic group of manufacturing exports are those characterised by high-level technology which is still the realm of the North.

Further, much of production and trade takes place within the worldwide operations of TNCs and are often in contradiction to domestic policies of newly industrialising countries. Their size, reach, control and the experience of many countries (Allende in Chile) make TNCs unwelcome despite the much-needed capital and technology that they bring in. As the Report has correctly pointed out, 'Underlying many of the fears about multi-national corporations both in the South and the North, is the concern that they have been able to race ahead in global operations out of reach of effective controls by nation-States or international organisations, that they have been able to benefit from economic disorders at a time when many nations have suffered from them, and that they constitute a network of transnational power which has provided a new element in the struggle of political and economic forces.'

In this game of North-South the ball is in the court of the North, in turn guided by TNCs. The Report hopes to retrieve the ball for the Centre through a set of neat recommendations. Every issue is followed by policy recommendations which in 'Report-fashion' are repeated at the end of the book. The recommendations are not revolutionary. They only reiterate the oft-stated lame reliance on more dialogue between the North-South. Even more disappointing are the concrete proposals which involve a return to the initial U.N. Resolution of 0.7 per cent of GNP as aid, the need for a new world organisation with a greater voice to the South, and a restructuring of the existing institutions which includes regulation and surveillance of TNCs. The Report denigrates itself to a proselytizing role, for when the chips are down neither the rich industrial





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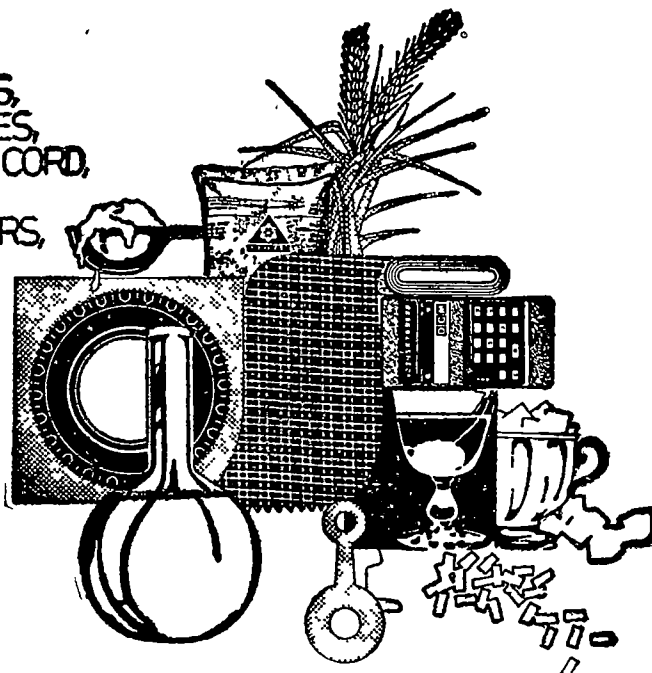
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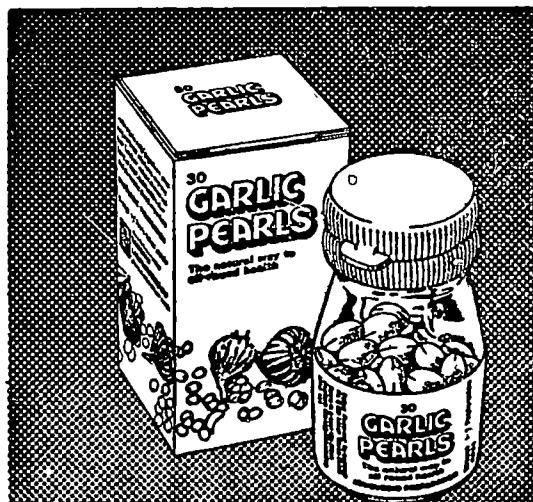
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nations nor the TNCs have paid much attention to it

The most the Report has managed is an occasional mention in official press communiques. The British Government under Thatcher has disowned the Report by turning a cold shoulder to the recommendations with an evasive 'shall be looked into' attitude. In fact, they have come up with a counter report known as the 'Whitehall' memorandum. Other industrial nations have not been enthusiastic either. If the North was moved by Reports headed by 'enlightened people' rather than by the realities of power politics, the despairing situation would have ceased to exist long ago.

Geeta Gouri

**MARXIAN ECONOMICS** by Meghnad Desai Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1979

ON the author's own admission (on p. 4), this book offers 'only one (possible) interpretation' of Marxian economics, of which there are now some ten interpretations in circulation, as against only four around 1960. The author starts by asserting that under capitalism there exist three parallel 'systems' whose synchronized gyrations or 'circuits' make the economic system work, viz., the 'quantity system' (pertaining to the 'physical relations of production' measured in physical units e.g., 5 tonnes of coal used in producing 1 tonne of iron), the 'value system' (pertaining to the relations between quantities of labour directly and indirectly contained in commodities entering into exchange or the process of production, measured in units of labour-time, e.g., labour-hours), and the 'price system' (pertaining to the relations involving the money prices of commodities, e.g., Rs 13 per kilogram of corn). This understanding is rather like the Cartesian notion in western philosophy of the simultaneous existence of 'two parallel worlds of mind and matter', symbolised by two synchronized clocks, which function independently, but show the same time.

The difference, however, is that in the author's interpretation (i) the 'value system' is unobservable, only the 'quantity system' and the 'price system' consist of observable entities (according to the author, Marx's 'fundamental error' was that he 'treated value relations as if they were observable and directly measurable' (p. 68), (ii) the entities of the 'value system' can always be 'transformed' into corresponding or synchronized entities of the 'price system' and vice versa.

At the second step in his argument, Desai makes use of the Marxian theory of 'mystification' of economic relations under capitalism to assert that while the three 'parallel systems' are tied to each other like Siamese triplets, it is only in the 'value system', which is *invisible*, that the 'relations of exploitation between capital and labour can be 'unmasked' or proved to exist (pp. 15, 17, 27, 68). The mission of Marx's political economy, which he could not fulfill, was to make 'profits emerge at the *visible* level from the underlying unobservable .. value relationship' (p. 31).

At this point, Desai's argument becomes a little difficult to follow, as he tries to fulfil Marx's unfulfilled aim. First, we have the problem of grasping exactly how exploitation, indicated and measured by 'surplus value' or 'surplus labour' becomes 'visible' without becoming 'observable'. Second, it is hard to accept the argument that the basis of exploitation under capitalism is 'unequal exchange' in the labour market, between capitalists who have a 'class monopoly' over the means of production, without which labour cannot be employed, and workers, who are at the mercy of the capitalists because they own no means of production, and own only their labour-power. For, in strict logic, as also in reality, as Marx pointed out in *Wage Labour and Capital* (1847) 'The worker perishes if capital does not employ him. Capital perishes if it does not employ labour power, and in order to exploit it, must buy it.'

Third, Desai tells us on p. 11 that relative prices of products are *not* proportional to 'the ratio of labour content' (i.e., direct plus indirect labour contained in commodities) *alone*, but are functions of (i) 'labour content', (ii) the 'technical coefficients of production', and (iii) the rate of profit. This is correct. Of course, investigations over a hundred years have shown that we can *imagine* 'well-defined conditions' of production and exchange in which relative prices will, logically, be proportional *only* to labour contained in commodities. But such conditions, however 'well-defined' are not *capitalist* conditions as defined by Marx, or by anybody else, e.g., conditions in which the rate of profit is zero everywhere (so that capitalism has ceased to exist).

Alternatively, they refer to technological features which Marx rightly regarded as never being found in real life, e.g., that *all* commodities are immediately or ultimately produced by labour *alone*, without the use of raw materials or capital equipment of any kind, or that the 'organic composition of capital' or the 'capital: labour ratio' is equal in all branches of production (for which there is no conceivable rationale), or that an 'iron law of wages' prevails, by which *all* workers, in all branches of the economy, are paid the same 'subsistence wage', preferably paid in kind. But if this is so, how can we even *imagine* a capitalist system which has hidden within its entrails an invisible 'value system' where *alone* exploitation of labour by capital is *visible*? Is this not rather like insisting that by studying the habits of legendary horse-like creatures called unicorns (much discussed by analytical philosophers debating the Theory of Description) we can understand the economics of horse-breeding?

For the reasons just noted, Desai's attempt to 'lay bare' the central fact of exploitation of labour by capital under capitalism is analytically unconvincing. Like about sixteen other books in circulation on the same theme, it draws attention to a central problem of theory, as well as of society. But for a more convincing solution, we have to look elsewhere.

Arun Bose



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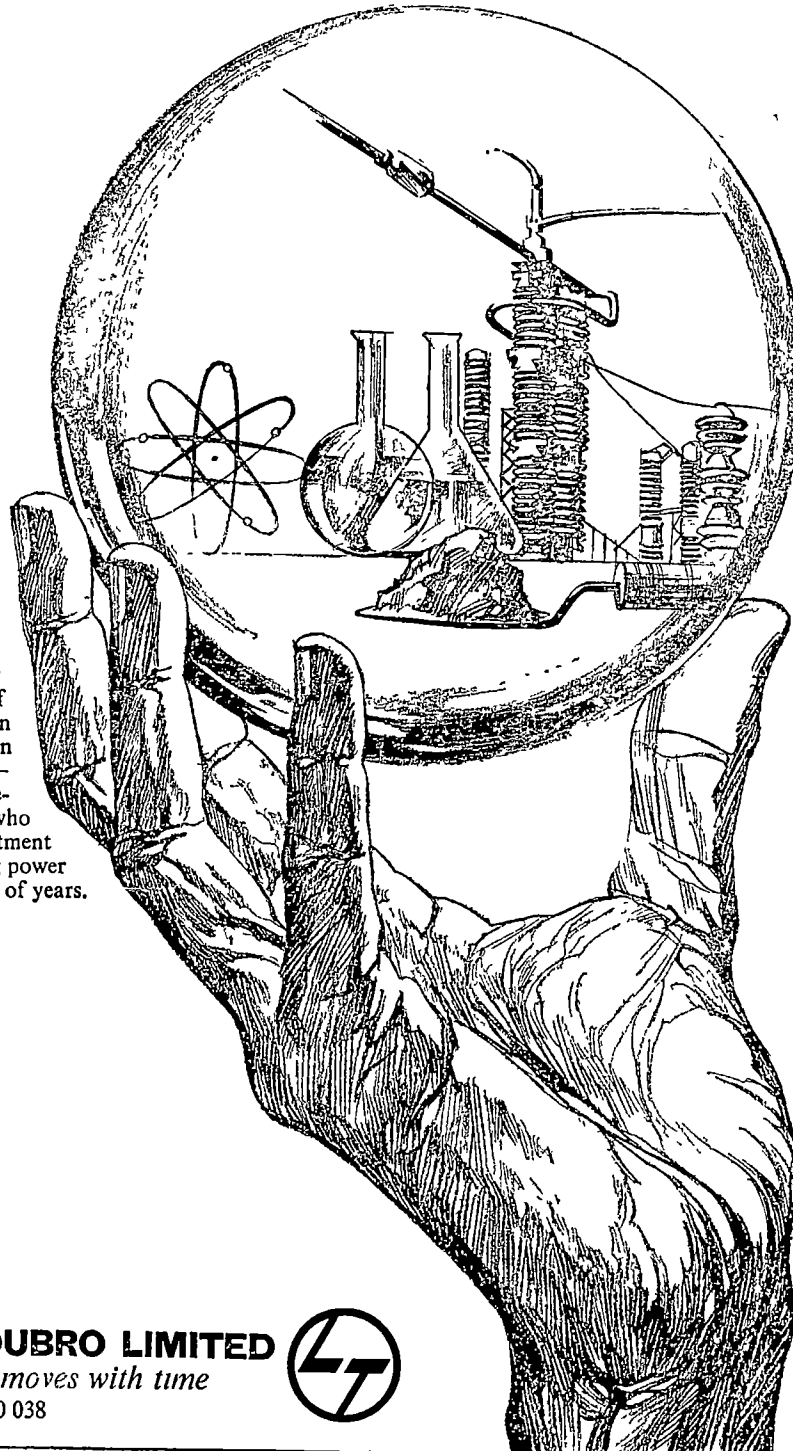


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INS907





## Coffee isn't the only thing that goes down well at the Akbar.

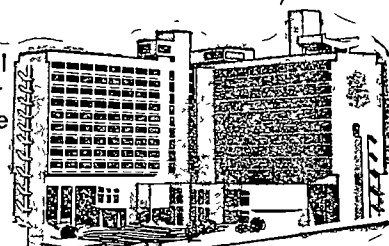
"When you've been out shooting all day, and come back dog tired it's nice to see a smile and steaming coffee in front of you in a matter of moments."

There's lots at the Akbar that's new. A larger lobby, shopping arcade and another restaurant. Not to mention 150 more rooms! But that detracts nothing from the familiar charm and vintage atmosphere at the Akbar. The service as superb, the aura as exclusive.

Swim the hours away at the pool, take in a snack at the Madhuban or dine in regal style at the Sheesh Mahal. Or just rent a Mercedes and drive off wherever you want.

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## **You who worry about one family's rice and dal-**

Checking and storing the best of rations for your own family is not such an enormous task, compared to what the Food Corporation of India does. FCI undertakes the responsibility of providing 130 million Indian families healthy and edible foodgrains. Families spread all over this vast land, each spared the worry of its next regular supply of rations. Because FCI, with its massive transportation, storage and distribution operations assures every consumer a constant supply of foodgrains at a fixed and fair price.

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FCI provides foodgrains at a price much lower than actual costs. Expenses are incurred at every stage of operations, from procurement to final distribution. For instance, FCI pays the farmer a procurement price of Rs 117 00 per quintal of Grade 1 wheat. Over and above this, statutory and other compulsory charges like mandi fee, mandi labour, local transportation, purchase tax and cost of gunny bags paid by FCI amount to Rs 20 64. This is within the mandi itself. Additional expenses

of storage, transportation, interest on loans and administrative overheads amount to Rs 23 41. Resulting in a total cost of Rs. 161 05 per quintal to FCI. But the selling price to distributing agencies of various states is maintained at Rs 130 00. The difference of Rs 31 05 per quintal is met by the Government. This is the consumer subsidy, provided by the Government and channelised through FCI.

### **The Gain is Greater Than the Loss**

Many lakh tonnes of foodgrains are handled by FCI while procuring at the mandi, weighing, grading, storing, transporting and finally distributing. This naturally results in a certain amount of spillage, for most of these complex operations are handled manually. There still exists a certain amount of dependence on temporary storage methods. These are open to the vagaries of nature like cyclones and rains, which may result in some loss. Yet losses have only been around 1%. FCI is constantly trying to minimise losses, by improving and increasing storage facilities.

## **imagine being responsible for the rations of 130 million families**

### **The Cost of Feeding a Nation**

In spite of having to feed 130 million families, the expenses incurred by FCI in the handling of foodgrains are a mere 17% of acquisition cost. The bulk of this is incurred towards movement of foodgrains and interest on loans from banks. For all these various operations, what is spent

on administrative overheads is only around 1% of the total cost.

Any operation as extensive and complex as FCI's will find itself faced with a number of problems. But the Corporation's constant endeavours are directed towards surmounting these problems and solving them in the best interest of the people.

# **FOOD CORPORATION OF INDIA**

*In the service of the nation*

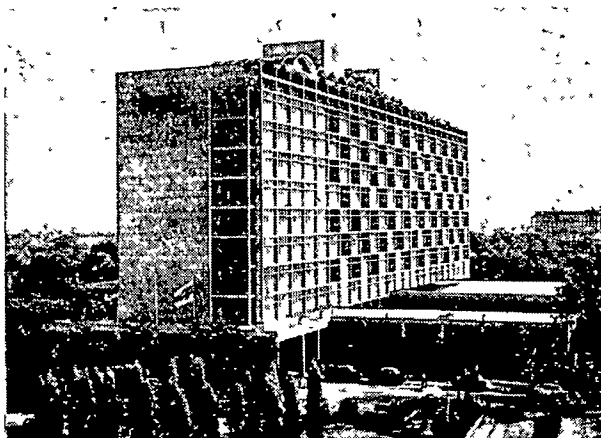
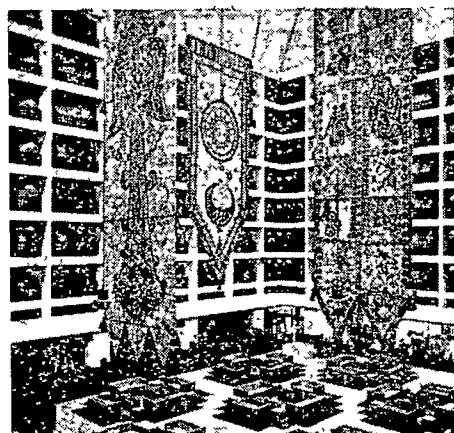


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Lanka Oberoi, Colombo's Garden Hotel  
For magical moments in Sri Lanka Visit any  
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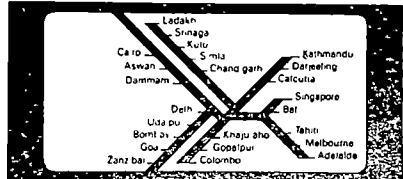
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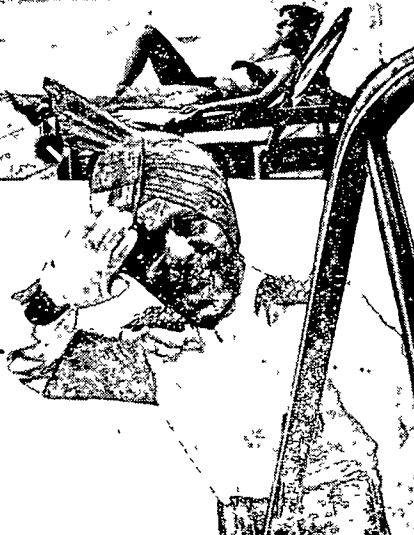
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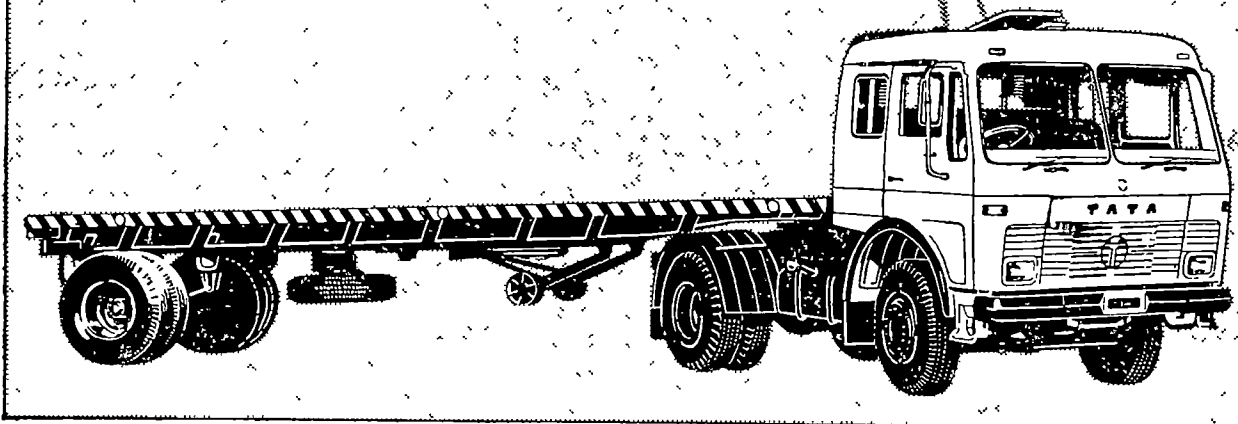




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# TATA 1516 TRACTOR TRAILER

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Something good going for you.



# Seminar

## 254

October 1980

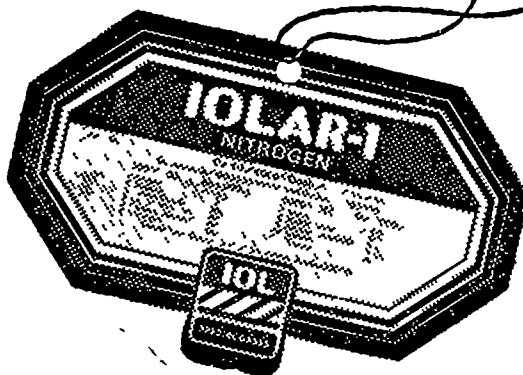
# Studying

# our society



MAKING HIGH PURITY GASES IS ONE THING...

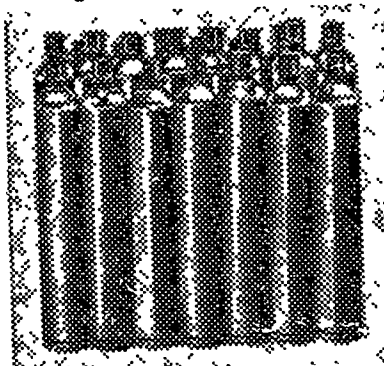
# **CERTIFYING THEIR IMPURITIES TO LESS THAN A MILLIONTH PART - THAT'S TECHNOLOGY!**



That's the measure of Indian Oxygen's gases processing and handling technology

It takes technological vision of the highest order to perceive gases even to zero levels. To define in absolute terms the miniscule impurities that are inevitable in high purity gases and liquids. To prepare with the utmost precision, gases and gaseous chemical mixtures of stringent specifications. The labels which certify our IOLAR range of special gases testify to this technological excellence. The beneficiaries? The newer and more sophisticated industries who would otherwise have to import their requirements

IOL has ever been in the forefront of gases applications technology. The innovations introduced by IOL have resulted in enormous saving of energy, leading to higher productivity in



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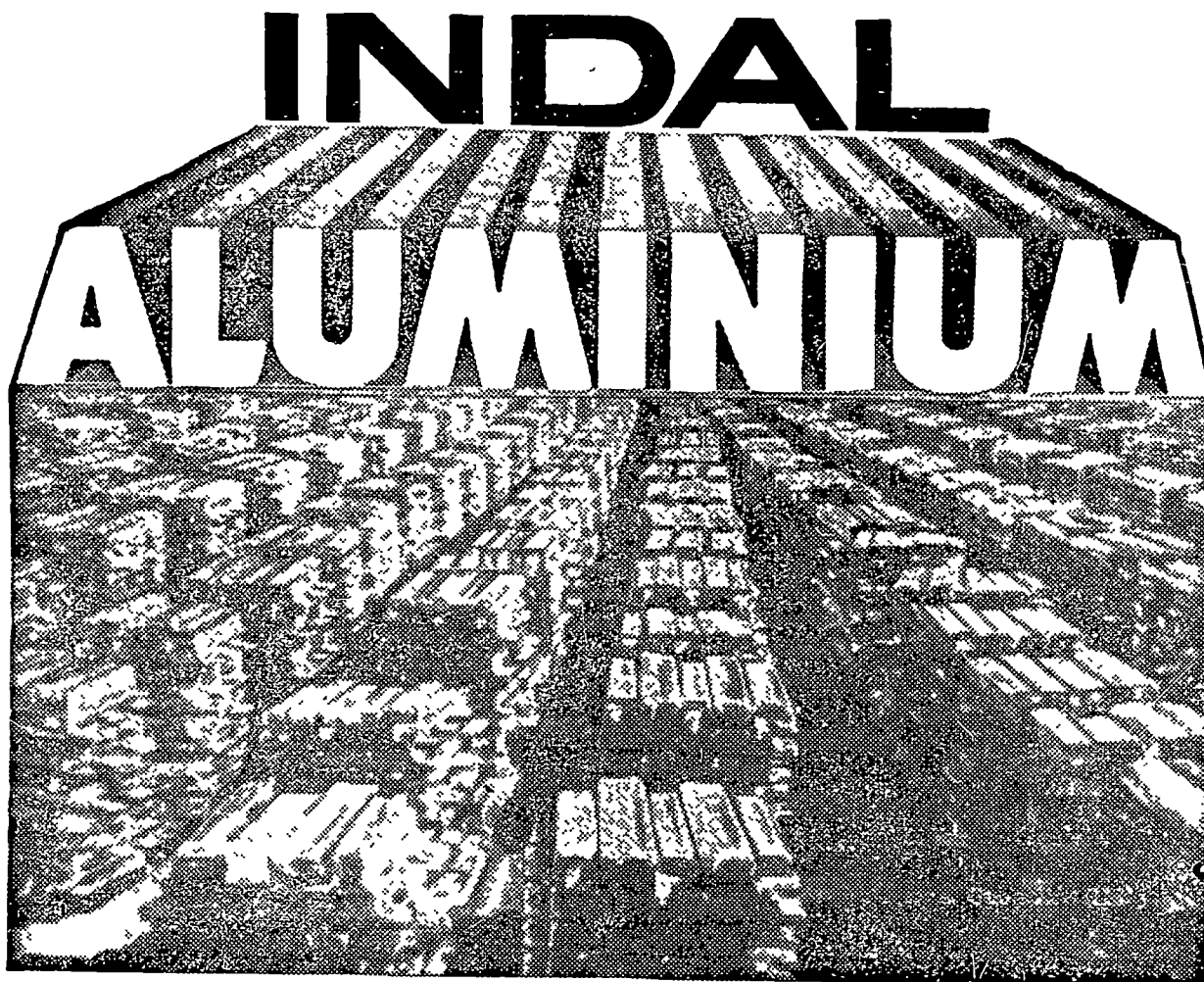


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**IOL offers the best in technology**

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## **INDAL in India's economy**

Aluminium produced by INDAL goes into industries vital to the growth of the Indian economy. Power Transmission, Transportation, Defence, Packaging, Coinage, Construction and Machine building are some of the important fields of application of this versatile metal. And INDAL delivers the metal in more forms than any other

supplier to meet the country's ever-growing needs.

INDAL continues to diversify the uses of aluminium, saves valuable foreign exchange through its relentless efforts at import substitution and earns much-needed foreign exchange through exports.



**INDIAN ALUMINIUM COMPANY, LIMITED**

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**In Jamshedpur, steel blooms. So do people.**



We make steel  
We also grow roses  
Maybe the roses  
should come first  
because people must  
come first That's  
the only way  
steel blooms

TISCO learned this  
long ago That is  
why we are making  
a 70-year-old plant  
younger, improving  
quality and  
productivity—to  
serve people better

The steel-user,  
the steel worker,  
the nation

All this for  
what? Perhaps it's  
because TISCO is  
what it is 60,000  
employees who  
know that here is  
wealth from the  
people that goes  
back to them,  
multiplied, that, with  
caring, all things  
grow. Flowers  
Steel People

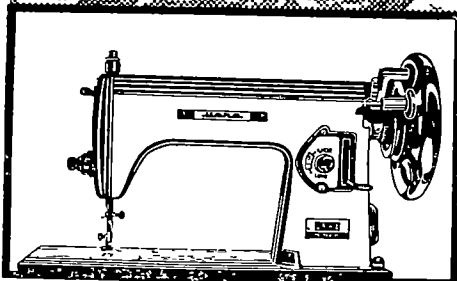
**Jamshedpur—The vision that has flourished for 70 years**

**TISCO**

LINTAS TISCO 15 2015

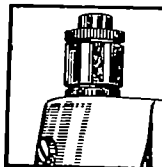


# Elegant looks



## Versatile features

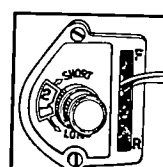
Attractive Sleek Two-toned USHA Streamlined—the sewing machine that outclasses any other in its price range. With features that others can't match. And a 5-year guarantee too.



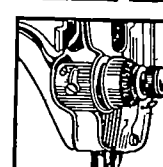
Patch Darning for easy darning and quick adjustment of pressure on cloth.



3-position drop feed for easy adjustment of feed-dog position.



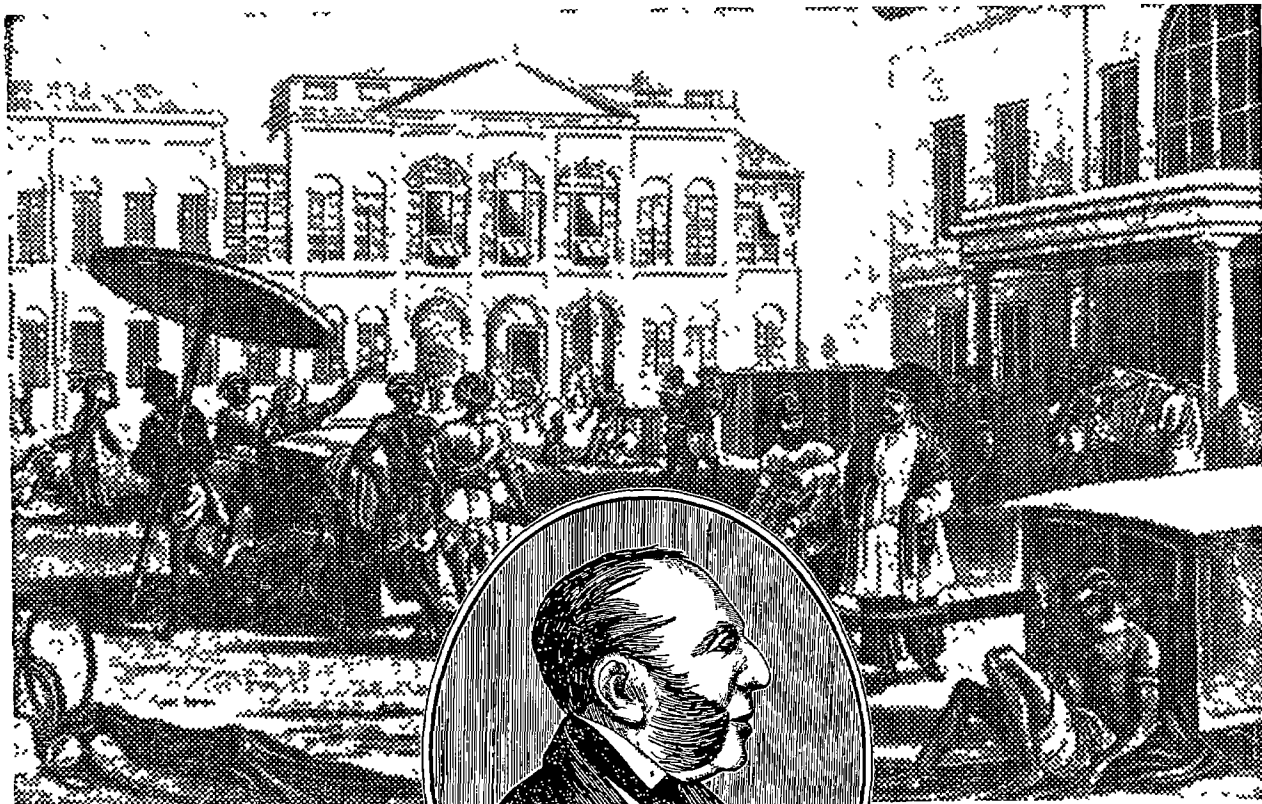
Dial-type stitch regulator with lever for forward and reverse stitch control and locking arrangement.



Thread tension adjuster for regulating pool thread tension.

**USHA Streamlined** feature for feature a better machine





▲ Scene in Bombay from a drawing by Capt Grindlay

◀ Captain Robert Melville Grindlay M R A S &c.

## 'Made in India': Grindlays was.

Long before Mr Kipling lamented about East and West, one of his compatriots had done something about helping the twain meet.

The man of action was Captain Robert Melville Grindlay (the title, a memento of a brief military stint in India) who, in 1828, floated an agency in London Leslie & Grindlays. The Grindlays banking operations in India began in 1854 (Grindlays, Groom & Company) in Calcutta. Scant 11 years later, a Bombay office opened for business. Soon, the bank (rechristened Grindlays

in 1908) had offices all over India (New Delhi, Simla, Quetta, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Madras) as well as in Ceylon and Rhodesia. Meanwhile, in 1863, the National Bank of India had come into being. In 1958, the National Provincial Bank, which had earlier acquired Grindlays, transferred the ownership to the National Bank of India.

On 1st January 1975, National & Grindlays Bank Limited became Grindlays Bank Limited, along with its Indian heritage of over 120 years.

Today, Grindlays is a banking professional in touch with tomorrow, with a worldwide network of branches/offices in 37 countries. And, despite Mr Kipling's fears of yore, the twain do meet wherever Grindlays stands and serves.



**Grindlays  
Bank  
Limited**

Incorporated in the United Kingdom.  
The liability of members is limited.

ASP/BM 380/108 G.R.



# **the art of good management...**



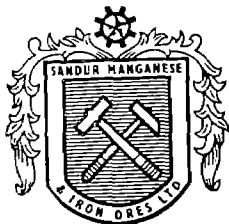
**moulding our varied resources — human,  
natural, technological — for the  
common good.**

Shriram seminars and courses are part of this moulding process... which involves executives in a ceaseless interchange of ideas, discussion of modern techniques, evaluation and reconsideration of policies. So that the Shriram organisation is constantly infused with fresh dynamism, and our resources are utilised to the optimum.



**SHRIRAM FERTILISERS AND CHEMICALS**





## *The Sandur Manganese & Iron Ores Limited*

Registered Office: "LOHADRI BHAVAN"  
Yeshwantnagar-583 124, via Sandur,  
Karnataka



Speech of the  
Chairman Shri Y R  
Ghorpade delivered at  
the 26th Annual  
General Meeting held  
on 25th September  
1980

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have great pleasure in extending to you a warm welcome to the 26th Annual General Meeting of the company

2 Our company has made a record profit of Rs 224 lakhs. as compared to Rs 40 lakhs during the previous year. The turn-over of the company also reached a peak figure of Rs 1350 lakhs. This result is all the more satisfying because it has been achieved inspite of a severe power cut in Karnataka, which was as high as 72% from October 1979 to March 1980 and averaged 51% during the year. The excellent reputation that our products enjoy in the market, and the skilful use of available power to optimise profits in a difficult situation, enabled the company to achieve these results. The leadership provided by the management enabled all the officers and employees of the company to function as an efficient team, and the tradition of happy labour-management relations contributed, in no small measure, to this heartening result, inspite of heavy odds. This has made it possible for the company to give a maximum bonus of 20% to its 4,000 employees, clear all arrears of preference dividend, and declare 10% dividend on equity shares. I take this opportunity of thanking all the financial institutions and share holders, without whose co-operation and understanding it would not have been possible for the company to broad-base its foundations and grow to

its present size and stature. The sound and forward looking financial and managerial policies followed by the company over the past so many years has started paying dividends, and will continue to do so in the years to come. I am grateful to all my colleagues on the Board for their valuable guidance.

3 It is a matter of great satisfaction that the company was able to commission its second ferrosilicon furnace on 1st September 1980. It may be recalled that, apart from the 15,000 KVA pig iron furnace installed in 1968, the company undertook a sizeable project to set up two ferrosilicon furnaces at a capital cost of about Rs 10 crores, to produce 24,000 tonnes of ferrosilicon per annum. As against a total cost of Rs 10 crores, as much as Rs 3.5 crores came from internal generation, which is clearly indicative of the Company's financial strength and stability. The project is now complete in all respects, and all the three furnaces are functioning smoothly to full capacity, as there is no power cut, at present, in Karnataka. It is creditable that the entire erection and commissioning of the second ferrosilicon furnace, including fabrication of indigenous machinery, was successfully completed by the company's technicians. This has resulted in the company making some savings in the capital cost of the project. I also wish to thank M/s Elkem Spigerverket A/S, Norway, the suppliers of imported equipment, for their co-operation.

4 The Directors' Report and the Accounts for the year ending 31st March 1980 shows a profit of Rs 224 lakhs, after providing depreciation of Rs 73 lakhs and interest of Rs 83 lakhs. The surplus at the end of the year in the Profit & Loss Account is Rs 146 lakhs as detailed in the Directors' Report. This has enabled the company to clear the arrears of preference dividend, and declare dividends on preference and equity shares for the year, in consultation with the financial institutions. It shall be the endeavour of the company to declare even higher dividends on equity shares in the years to come.

5 During the year 1979-80 our pig iron furnace achieved a record production of 33,309 tonnes of low phos pig iron. The quality of our pig iron is now well established in the internal market. The sales during the year touched a peak of 33,172 tonnes. The reliability of quality and supplies is a major factor contributing to the popularity of our pig iron with specialised foundries producing high quality products.



6 As already mentioned, this was a year of severe power cut. After utilising the available power for maximising pig iron production, it was possible to produce only 5733 tonnes of ferrosilicon. The quality of our ferrosilicon has earned a very good name in the internal and international market. We were able to export 1,000 tonnes of ferrosilicon during the first quarter. Subsequently, there was shortage of ferrosilicon in the home market, mainly due to inadequate power. This year the Linganamakki reservoir in Karnataka has filled up because of good rains in the catchment area, and the power situation in the State has improved considerably. This will undoubtedly enable the company to step up its ferrosilicon production significantly.

7 During the year 1979-80, manganese ore production was 2.18 lakh tonnes, and the sales were of the order of 1.69 lakh tonnes including exports of 89,556 tonnes. We have once again impressed upon the MMTC to prevail upon the Government to have a second look at its policy with regard to manganese ore exports — especially low grade manganese ore which is available in plenty — in the interest of sustaining at least the present level of employment in the industry. Our manganese ore division, which employs about 3,000 persons, is geared to a production of about 2.5 lakh tonnes. If the company is forced to reduce its manganese ore production below this level, it will not only increase the unit cost unrealistically, but also endanger employment. Mining is the mainstay of employment in this area and should be fully safeguarded. The rupee price payable by the MMTC for manganese ore should be realistic and take care of the economic viability of manganese ore production in the organised sector.

8 It is of paramount importance that the real income of the employees is safeguarded, to the extent possible, from the effects of rising prices. It has been the policy of the company to ensure that at least the essential commodities are made available to the employees at stable prices. Accordingly, a scheme was introduced several years ago to supply fixed quantities of essential commodities, such as, rice, jowar, tur dal, jaggery, chillies and groundnut oil at the prices obtaining in March 1972. It was an effort to peg the value of the rupee in terms of these specified commodities. This scheme is in operation even today, and the quantities supplied at 1972 prices fully meet the requirement of a family. With prices rising every year, the element of subsidy has also increased. The open market prices, on an average, are double the rates at which these commodities are supplied to our employees under the subsidy scheme. In other words, a package of essential commodities which would cost a family approximately Rs 150/- is made available at about Rs 75/-, costing the company Rs. 25 lakhs during the current year. This scheme has worked to the entire satisfaction of our employees, and has proved a much better solution than payment of increased dearness allowance every year. I feel Smiore's experience can be adopted on a wider scale in the country, wherever there is organised labour. The Union Finance Minister, Shri R. Venkataraman, with his wide experience and acumen, made a

realistic assessment of the economic situation while presenting the Budget to Parliament. His sincere efforts to increase production and contain inflation in the country deserve our fullest support.

9 The company has successfully implemented many other welfare measures designed to protect and enhance the real income and quality of living of our employees. Under the poultry and animal husbandry extension programme, our employees are actively encouraged to own a small poultry and a milch buffalo. A five-bird poultry unit is given free to each family. In the case of milch buffaloes, the company arranges the bank loan, bears the interest charges and gives every possible assistance to the employee in selection, transport and proper maintenance of the animals. The housing programme, both at the mines and the ferro-alloys plant, is being accelerated, and the educational and health services strengthened. The company contributes the entire premium towards a group insurance scheme, whereby a worker's family gets a lumpsum of Rs 10,500/- from the Life Insurance Corporation of India, in case of death while in service. Thus the welfare schemes and extension programme of the company are designed to ensure proper nutrition to the growing children, adequate health and educational facilities, and long term security to the employee and his family. Incidentally, SMIORE has never experienced any strike or labour trouble in more than 25 years of its purposeful existence.

10 The country is passing through a difficult phase. There is great need to strengthen the socio-economic infrastructure for faster development with peace and stability. The eroding effects of inflation and unemployment on the standard of living and human values have to be checked, and the national will has to be geared to this mighty task. The unity and integrity of the nation has to be maintained at all costs. In this great endeavour, the Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi deserves our fullest co-operation. Smiore has had a long record of achievement, for over 25 years, in the service of the country. The company, I am sure, will continue to contribute its mite, in increasing measure, to the progress of the nation in the years to come.

Thank you,

Y R GHORPADE

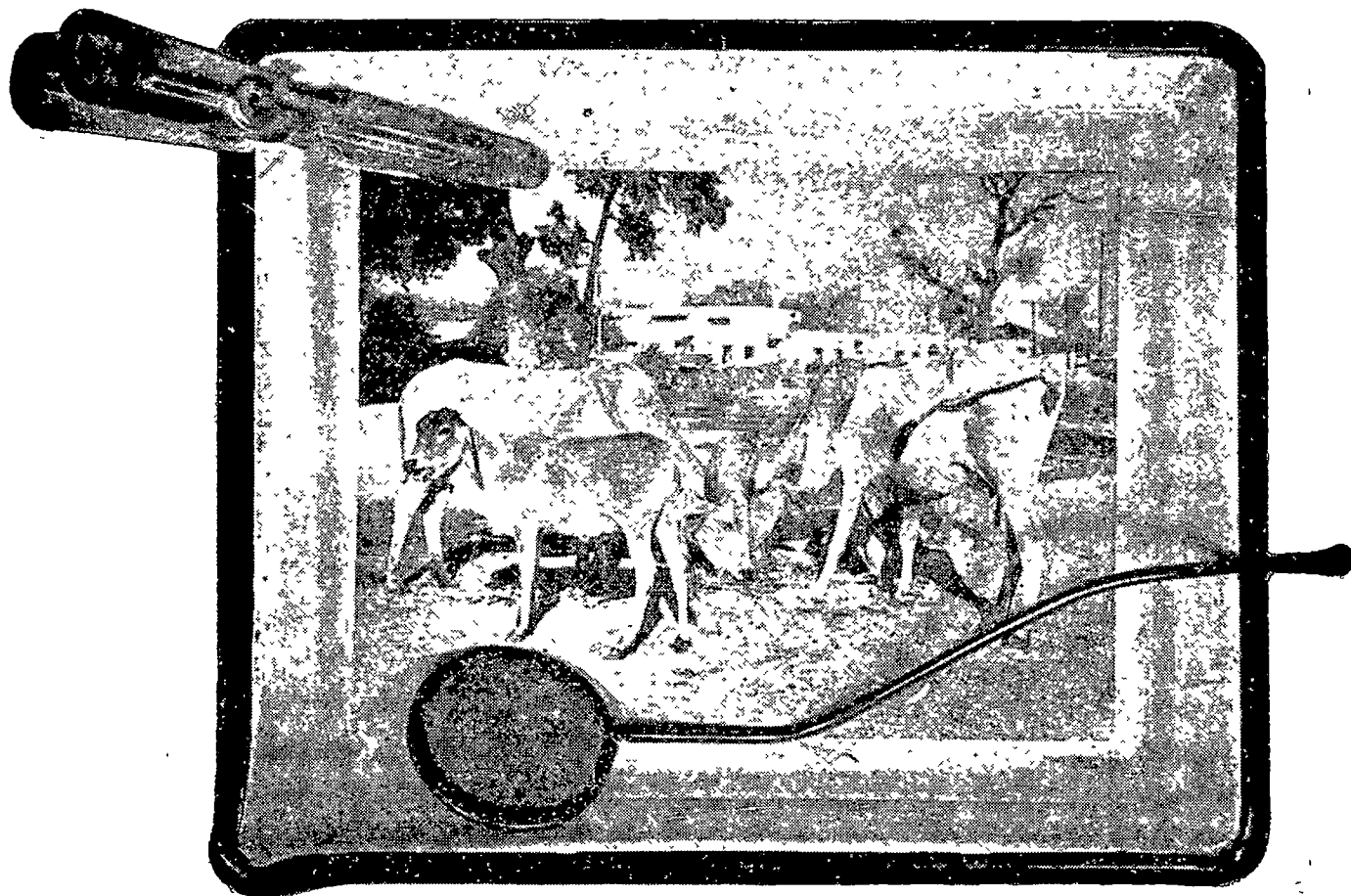
Yeshwantnagar,  
25th September, 1980

Note: This does not purport to be the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting of the Company.



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twenty miles away  
and the nearest hospital  
another thirty,  
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**Mahindra** Ambulance.

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# seminar

THE MONTHLY SYMPOSIUM POST BOX 338 NEW DELHI

Journal which seeks to reflect through free discussion, every side of Indian thought and aspiration. Each month, a single problem is debated by writers belonging to different persuasions. Opinions expressed have ranged from Janata to Congress, from Gandhian to Communist to Independent. And the non-political

specialist too, has voiced his views. In this way it has been possible to answer a real need of today, to give the facts and ideas of this age and to help thinking people arrive at a certain degree of cohesion and clarity in facing the problems of economics, of politics, of culture.

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NEXT MONTH: RAW POWER



# 254

## STUDYING OUR SOCIETY

a symposium on

the recurrent questions

facing sociologists

symposium participants

### THE PROBLEM

A short statement  
of the issues involved

### FOR RENEWAL

Satish Saberwal, Centre for Historical  
Studies, School of Social Sciences,  
Jawaharlal Nehru University

### THE SOCIAL REALITY

N. Jayaram, Assistant Professor of  
Sociology, Bangalore University

### SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

D. N. Dhanagare, Department of Sociology,  
University of Pune

### THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

Dipankar Gupta, Centre for Social Medicine  
and Community Health, Jawaharlal Nehru  
University

### THE WORKING CLASS

Anjan Ghosh, Sociology Group,  
Indian Institute of Management,  
Calcutta

### DISCIPLINED ECLECTICISM

Partha N. Mukherji, Professor of Sociology,  
Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta

### BOOKS

Reviewed by Aditi Desai, Ramdas Menon,  
Vinod Vyasulu, Amrit Srinivasan, M. N. Panini  
Simrita Gopal Singh and Savyasachin

### FURTHER READING

A select and relevant bibliography  
compiled by M. P. Nayar

### COVER

Designed by Dilip Chowdhury Associates



# The problem

IN the late 1960s, the social sciences in India were astir in search of a direction and an identity. Phrases like 'science and swaraj' were in the air. Expressing this mood, *Seminar* ran an issue on 'Academic Colonialism' (Dec. 1968), responding to a growing and variously threatening foreign presence.

Over the past decade the scene in international politics and in academia has changed in some ways; and even though the social sciences in India have begun to be financed relatively well, the Young Turks of yesteryear discovered that greater insulation was not synonymous with better growth; that autonomy — personal and collective could be stagnative as easily as creative.



India is today in enormous flux, and we understand but dimly what is really going on at its various levels. Uncomprehended, this flux has meant manifold stresses for our various institutions, and that includes the universities; yet the sociologists have been singularly silent over processes which ought to be their central concern and which, if gone out of control, could silence them involuntarily.

A new decade is therefore a good time to ask again the necessarily recurrent questions of where to go and why and how and, on the eve of their biennial conference at Meerut in November, these questions are tackled in the following pages by a group of sociologists for their own discipline.



# For renewal

SATISH SABERWAL

ONE way to grasp the Indian situation in sociology is to contrast it with that in the other social sciences. I find economics the most instructive foil. Both economists and sociologists have tried to transplant in India what they had learned in the West, and this effort grew stronger after 1947. Why do the economists appear to have fared much better than the sociologists? One answer is that western economics has offered, during this period, a relatively coherent tradition of thought and analysis — on the one hand the classical, neoclassical, and Keynesian, on the other the Russian experience of national-level planning.

These traditions of thought, analysis, projection, and control were thought to be immediately relevant in India because economics defined for itself a universe whose inherent attributes plus simplifying assumptions enabled widespread quantification and mathematical analysis. Wherever a highly monetized economy exists, modern economics can work — such at least have been

the claims! Through the 1950s and the 1960s this analytic and projective apparatus was blended, initially by Nehru, with wider purposes to give Indian planning a certain sense of direction, and the combined aura of mathematical analysis plus proximity to power made economics a discipline apart in the social sciences in India. (This promise of planning, this lure of putting oneself to high public purpose, may also have enabled economics to draw better talent during this period of expansion.)

The sociologists in contrast have taken on virtually everything in social experience, with the partial exception of areas appropriated for economic analysis. From kinship practices of the Australian aborigines to the religious beliefs of English capitalists, sociologists have dabbled in everything. A multiplicity of traditions arose, sometimes carefully insulated from each other. These beginnings are commonly located in the 19th century, set off by shock waves from an expansive (industrial) capitalism, which had



been generally disruptive of long-established ways of life

Grappling with the logic of capitalism, Marx wrote too about the various historical frameworks of production and exploitation, their correlates and consequences. He produced detailed analyses of the ongoing social and political upheavals in France, Germany and elsewhere, and his ideas, analyses, and calls to action have moved hundreds of millions down to our day.

Durkheim took capitalism for granted and asked, instead, how the scientific method could show societies the way to regain and retain a sense of integration under the new conditions. Central to his insight is the importance of a society's consensus over beliefs and symbols, seen to lie at the core of social coherence. Weber also took capitalism for granted, seeing in it a many-sided movement of western society towards greater 'rationality'. Why did it happen there, he asks, and not in the several Asian civilizations? And his search for an answer leads him through the historical record of China, India, Judaism, Europe and much else.<sup>1</sup>

Marx and Durkheim were both grounded in philosophy, Weber in legal thought. American sociologists would later bring rather more pragmatic concerns to analyses of community life, race relations, spread of agricultural techniques, morale in industrial production, and so forth.

Europe's expansion into the other continents — fuelled by, and adding fuel to, the engine of capitalism — confronted the 18th and 19th century western scholarship also with the puzzling ways of the rest of mankind. Many of these peoples lived in remote areas, were illiterate, and their beliefs and customs struck European visitors as wondrously strange. Anthropology, another scholarly speciality, arose to cope with puzzles of this order. American, British, French and other anthropologists tended to work in regions which happened to be under

their governments' political control or influence.

A great deal of anthropology, at least until World War II, consisted in recording the particularities of the society being studied, though this was done in ways which carried one's own distinctive national stamp. Each of these several streams, in sociology and anthropology, descended from its own pre-sociological intellectual ranges, and several were responsive to specific national situations believed to need analysis, though these contemporary interests would usually go through proper academic filters.

Taken all together, the foregoing comprise a disparate array of central questions, research methods, and analytic styles, and matters were not helped by the ongoing turmoil within western sociology which, over these decades, has been racked, for example, by French structuralism — Levi-Strauss, Dumont, Althusser and others — at one end and by the demands of an industrial mass society for various orders of computerized analyses at the other.

If all this vast continent was sociology, and if it was to find coherence in India, it would need much selection and blending into an integration of questions, methods, and styles, into a cogent sense of the problem, in order to challenge its potential votaries into committing themselves to this discipline. To achieve and sustain such an integration, however, needed a sense of professional autonomy, a matter less of rules against external interference and more of a drive to create intellectual order out of a prior chaos or thoughtlessness and of a consequent achieved sense of one's own worth. This sense of autonomy has to arise at the levels both of the individual and of the professional community.

2. See G S Ghurye, *I and other explorations*, 1973, Bombay, Popular, esp. Ch. 5, and S H and L I Rudolph, eds., *Education and Politics in India*, 1972, Delhi, OUP, pp. 44-45. The internal disarticulation noticed in colonial and other peripheral economies (Samir Amin, *Accumulation on World Scale*, 1974, Harvester Press, p. 286 etc.) is just as evident in academia, and particularly strong in sociology.

Such matters have provoked little curiosity in India, but some brief comments might suggest the size of the problem. Something like a need for autonomous achievement is (or is not!) in an immediate sense, part of one's psyche, of one's personality structure. The psychological understanding of how personality is formed is complex, and it would be more so for a society as variegated as the Indian, but any reasonable account would give substantial weight to the society's (or one's social segment's) ideas regarding what kind of person is desirable and to one's experiences in infancy, childhood, and later. Beyond that, just as one's genes, interacting with the environment, contribute to the kind of person one becomes, so too the young adult's previously shaped personality, interacting with his or her professional-in-the-making environment, would contribute to the kind of professional or scholar one would become.

A minute's reflection would show that the young adults entering the Indian university system today have, and for several generations will continue to have, vastly varied personality structures, and while some societies have sought deliberately and with some success, to produce a 'new man', we in India have not been working to any such vision. We might possibly have somewhat greater leverage, however, with the professional environment which does, after all, hold the young adult in tutelage for a decade or more.

It so happens, however, that our professional environments too have a past to outlive, for the colonial circumstances tended to make Indian professionals, institutionally or conventionally, look up to their British counterparts, such habits are incompatible with autonomous judgment and achievement. Subsequent decolonization was slow in sociology, for during the 1950s, and 1960s, Indian sociologists and anthropologists had access to much greater opportunities, than, say, the historians, through the patronage of their American counterparts, and lacking a strong, autonomous intellectual base, we were grateful for both the paradigms and the opportunities,

1. Raymond Aron offers intelligent reading on these early masters in his *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, Penguin, 2 vols.



Every heritage, however, is continuously in flux, being reinforced, renewed, modified, and changed by its bearers' choices and actions, and giving collective expression to a change of direction might well help the latter to prevail

**T**he impasse in Indian sociology arises also from the enormous complexity of Indian society. The vast bulk of our sociological effort has been pre-empted by monographic work on relatively small social units. When the limitations of village studies was finally realized, we tended to turn to relatively well-bounded social groups: doctors (T N Madan), trade unions (E A Ramaswamy), urban castes (S Saberwal), the insides of a factory (N R. Sheth) and, more ambitiously, peasant movements (D N Dhana-gare, P N Mukherji) and the like

What happens, however, is that observations in a particular group or locality require, for satisfactory interpretation, an understanding of the processes in the larger society. Numerous sociologists (including me) have come to grief, for example, by over-estimating a limited Dalit move into white collar jobs etc., since we had no clear idea whether inequalities in the wider Indian society were growing or shrinking. Or again, the movement of some formerly low status castes into small-scale industrial entrepreneurship<sup>3</sup> is sometimes held to illustrate a general opening up of entrepreneurship to all castes

This might gladden hearts to whom entrepreneur is Hero, but the citadels of India's big capital are not about to fall so easily and the reasons for this can be grasped only if the social organization of that big capital is seen in the context of broader economic activity and the surrounding social structure. Yet, to these larger units, Indian sociologists have had considerable difficulty in getting oriented, largely because as I said Indian society is enormously complex and involuted.<sup>4</sup>

3 A Punjabi case appears in my *Mobile Men* (Vikas, 1976), and one from Howrah in Raymond Owens and Ashis Nandy, *The New Vaisyas* (Allied, 1977)

4 The literature has at least three attempts at coping with this larger whole.

This weakness apart, I have mentioned some of the interesting monographic work, and one must refer also to Ramkrishna Mukherjee's methodological interest and to the diversifying influence at Delhi University of Andre Beteille, of Jit Uberoi, and more recently of Veena Das. Remarkably, however, each of them appears to plough a lonely furrow, they seldom refer to or review each other's work.<sup>5</sup> Missing during the 1970s was any sense of shared central questions or overlapping sense of the problem (problematic is the 'in' word), and if such interconnections define a discipline, it could be argued that during this period the discipline of sociology has been weak in India

**I** proceed now to identify a series of notions which seem to point to key facets of Indian social complexity. Each of these notions is familiar in the social sciences to the point of being a cliché, yet, together, these suggest a perspective on the whole, necessary both in itself and as anchor for monographic work

First of all, a society is a space-time process, wherein certain junctures matter more than others. The colonial relationship, becoming definite with Plassey in 1757, was a strategic juncture. A great deal of precolonial life and institutions did continue into the colonial era, and therefore the sociologist of modern India has to take the historian of medieval India seriously.<sup>6</sup> Yet the

A R Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (1948), M N Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India* (1966), and Yogendra Singh, *Modernization of Indian Tradition* (1973). Each for somewhat different reasons, however, has not been able to provide the kind of interpretative support needed from the direction of the whole

5 Do we have here again 'that strand in Indian culture which leads a person away from other people, into the wilderness, either literally or in the form of a deep narcissistic concern with his own salvation?' J Moussaieff Masson, *The Oceanic Feeling: The origins of religious sentiment in ancient India*, 1980, Dordrecht (Holland) D. Reidel, p 16. The author is both a sanskritist and a psycho-analyst

6 After Ghurye and Dumont there should have been no need to remind ourselves of the Hindu tradition — going back

British dominion did mean a sea change in crucial areas, and sociologists must grasp that, too, accurately

In other words, the space-time we choose for ourselves should help to explain, rather than obscure, such phenomena as the contemporary strength of the capitalist class or of communalism. Perhaps not many of us would work with the primary sources for medieval or colonial India, but nothing bars us from our colleagues' work on the frameworks of ideas and of interests during these periods, so tenacious in later social processes

Ideas and interests,<sup>7</sup> or rather the interplay between them is the second element we need to consider. While interests do preside at the birth of ideologies, once established, ideas may acquire a life of their own, interpreting the phenomenal world for the believers and establishing the goals for a worthy life for them. Around and in terms of these ideas and meanings, fresh sets of interests tend to arise. As we shall see in relation to communalism, these ideas and meanings may come to constitute the cores for social identities, which in turn may be an element, sometimes an intractable element, in defining the structure of interests

**G**ranting historical depth and the interplay of ideas and interests, the complexity of India dictates that the road to understanding this 'whole' lies through an orderly study of its 'parts', but what kinds of parts? We have a dialectic here: a given view of the whole, of its nature and direction of movement, would point to certain kinds of parts for enquiry,<sup>8</sup> that enquiry then may persuade us to review our

into ancient India — but for our absorption in the perennially engaging circuses which pass for much of 'academic' life on our campuses!

7 This is the title of Andre Beteille's paper reproduced in his *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure*, 1974, OUP. Over quite different terrains, our stance is not dissimilar.

8 See T N Madan, et al *Doctors and Society*, 1980, Sahibabad, Vikas, pp 1-4, on why Madan chose to study the medical profession



understanding of the whole, and so on. What remains of this essay will concentrate on two kinds of parts: one set deriving from the Marxian recognition of the centrality of the production process, and the other, from another sociological stream, concerned with religiously formed social identities. It will be seen that both these cases take one to the interplay of interests and ideas in their historical context.

**P**ut simply, it is principally with reference to the production process that questions like who controls and who is controlled, who labours and who gets its fruits, can be answered. In the flow of history, the facts of power galvanize the available technology and social traditions, continually to reshape the organization of production and the distribution of the product. It is with reference to how one makes a living that certain social ties arise, are strengthened, or are allowed to lapse. With reference to the production process, interests exist, may get interlinked, acquire a structure, and be asserted politically: think of FICCI or the farmers' lobby. Not that everything flows from the production process — the next section considers another kind of social core — merely that the logic of the economic framework affects a very great deal more than most of us have yet been prepared to notice.<sup>9</sup>

I begin with two consequences of the colonial era: (1) strengthening the linkages of different parts of Indian economy with their metropolitan complements: initially spices and the Indian artisanal products and, later, the newer commercial crops, went out, and the industrially produced consumer and capital goods came in. Conversely, the mutual linkages of these parts of Indian economy were weakened

what has been called the *disarticulation* of colonial economies. (2) In order to carry this colonization of Indian economy forward, we saw the creation of the infrastructure of administration, the establishment of railways and other grids of communication, the promulgation of a uniform legal code, and so forth.

Though designed to subserve the British bourgeoisie at home and in India, this infrastructure did allow an Indian capitalist class (ICC) to arise and grow also, and during the 20th century, it came to acquire considerable *political* influence. Connections established with the Congress before 1947 continued smoothly, and were made much stronger through provision of electoral funds and the like in later years. Certainly this class has had little cause to complain about the Constitution.<sup>10</sup>

**A**ll this everyone knows, yet it is proper to remember that the infrastructure which enabled the ICC to grow expressed the power of the British, not Indian, bourgeoisie. The latter had not, has not ever, vanquished the traditional realms of those based on agrarian land, even though the latter was constituted of relatively small individual units, and even though the larger zamindaris and the princely order, tips of the iceberg, were removed ultimately. I shall return to the staggering consequences of this situation shortly.

The traditional dominance based on control over agrarian land had several variants. The most important was the power ultimately of private armed might, arising in pre-colonial traditions of conquest; this power had tended to ebb and flow between rival, combative groups and between local, regional, and imperial centres over time. Some lands were endowed on favoured groups, and the gifts to Brahmins would continue to be held by them substantially by virtue of religious legitimacy. During the colonial era, moneylending came to be especially important for the timely collection of the colonial land revenue and moneylenders, sometimes coming

from far away, could take over the defaulting debtors' land. The workings of colonial revenue settlements, and of court law, however, tended in some measure to standardize these several sorts of interests in land.

This thumbnail sketch is meant to make a simple and rather obvious point: a landowner, a peasant or a tenant, a landless labourer — from say a village in Bihar — are persons whose psyches, worldviews, etc., are very different from those of a capitalist, a manager, a foreman, or a factory worker in a heavily industrial region. Why? Because the agrarian social universe tends to be localized and relatively small in scale in most parts of India; it is marked with much greater elements of *personal* dominance and day-to-day dependence, with rather greater use of arbitrary personal power than the industrial milieu whose size tends to make for rather more impersonal, bureaucratic ways, which are often experienced in vast interconnected structures. One need not labour the obvious: a second-generation steelworker and a small peasant (or their sons) would be uncomfortable in each other's shoes (or the lack thereof!) — because they have grown up to be different kinds of men in different kinds of social universes.

**T**his sharp contrast has enabled me to make a point which holds more generally. Between the two poles of small-scale, rainfed agriculture and large-scale heavy industry, several forms of production have historically come into being in India. Illustratively, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the colonial regime sought to broaden its support by strengthening the upper peasantry vis-a-vis the landlords, improving their tenures and conferring franchise upon them.<sup>11</sup> This strength came to be expressed in later decades in the development of cooperative agra-

9 As will become clear I have learned much from the discussion on 'the colonial mode of production' and related issues. See, for example, Hamza Alavi, 'India and the colonial mode of production', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1975, 10:1235-62; Sharat G. Lin, 'Theory of a dual mode of production in post-colonial India', *EPW*, 1980, 15:516-29 and 565-73. I will not use that vocabulary here, however, because my central concern is different, and the making of satisfactory connections with that corpus would need more space and more time.

10. See, for example, S. Kochanek, *Business and Politics in India*, 1974, Berkeley, University of California Press.

11 D. Rothermund, 'Government, landlord and tenant in India, 1875-1900' *In his Phases of Indian Nationalism and Other Essays*, 1970, Bombay, Nachiketa; and D. A. Low, 'Introduction: the climactic years 1917-47' *In his ed., Congress and the Raj*, 1977, New Delhi, Arnold Heinemann,



rian capitalism in western India<sup>12</sup> and elsewhere Capitalist production in several shapes (industrial, agricultural), sizes (petty, small, large, monopoly, multinational), and forms (private, cooperative, State, etc.) in various combinations has found niches between the two poles noted above Together these provide the social framework for production overall

More their distinctive social universes have implications for the kind of personality each harbours, each defines the structure of interests — the class structure, if you prefer — in a somewhat distinctive manner, and the social experiences characteristic of each would be cast forth into the public realm in corresponding shades of ideology In this co-existing diversity of productive processes and the ramifying implications thereof lies the crucial key to the complexity of contemporary India

The internal logic of a form of production, its relation to the wider milieu, and evolutionary changes therein are often available in the literature already Their claim on the sociologist's attention is especially strong because, as the following will suggest, each form may be considered separately, in relation to each other, and in relation to the whole<sup>13</sup>

To continue our analysis the different forms of production are variously intermeshed, entailing the circulation of materials, of people, or of ideas, the sociological interest would centre on people and ideas The element of capitalist management, to give one example, has been reinforced in several agricultural regions via the agricultural universities Conversely, a base in the resources of the peasantry is said to have helped propel the Mahisyas into small-scale engineering entre-

preneurship in Howrah<sup>14</sup> Much more consequential, however, have been the post-47 adult franchise and expansion of higher education relatively large numbers of men of peasant and dominant caste backgrounds entered, or acquired connections in, the State apparatus — via both the lower rungs of bureaucracy and the electoral process This is not merely 'social mobility' When people of particular class backgrounds move into vastly different, and powerful, institutions, they carry their aspirations, informal skills, and social styles with them, and the sometimes seismic institutional consequences of such movement call for the sociologist's closest attention

The State in India, let us recall, descends directly from the colonial regime The key ideas of its structure came from England In their original home, these had come slowly to be institutionalized, reflecting the growing strength of newer classes as against the established older ones For mid-17th century England, Cromwell was one climax, standing for the bourgeoisie, for mid-19th century, the Chartists were another, as part of the working class<sup>15</sup> The promulgation of the ensuing principles in India was *not* the outcome of indigenous social processes These did not constitute historic compromises out of confrontations between great classes, and therefore the social forces committed to maintaining them were relatively weak<sup>16</sup>

The interests embodied in them were principally those of *colonial* governance and commerce so that, when the colonial power withdrew, the government seemed, and claimed, to be an impartial arbiter, an exalted authority with no interests

14 Raymond Owens and Ashis Nandy, *The New Vaisyas* (Allied, 1977), p 99 ff

15 The story is told in Christopher Hill, *Century of Revolution 1603-1714*, London, Nelson, 1967, and E P Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Penguin, 1963, to name only two It is important for the sociologist to understand the social origins of ideas which often reach his observational field only after vast transformations over space and time

16 *Relatively*, for these were even weaker in say Pakistan where, therefore, the inherited arrangements began to totter almost immediately.

other than the common weal May be it did act in these terms rather more in the early years than during the past decade, but two sets of interests were active around the State right from the word go

I have already noted that the bourgeoisie which, after long years of waiting, now prepared for State power to be used to promote industrialization, it would find ways to channel that process advantageously The second major interest group was the bureaucracy itself It controlled information, took or prepared the ground for allocative decisions, and exercised various orders of discretion Its upper layers came from rather particular social backgrounds, and their new shared life style and social inbreeding persuaded Andre Beteille to call them a 'new caste'

More or less discreetly, the upper bureaucrats certainly could do quite nicely for themselves — and their children The bourgeoisie needed, too, their mature experience and sane counsel Between these two sets of interests there was no conflict and a great deal of mutuality! If in advancing these complementary interests, the key ideas of the structure of the State got a beating, we have seen why historically no *major* social groups have had a stake in the ideas and the structure

Into this genial landscape, the Charan Singhs and the Raj Narains enter with the dignity of the bull in a china shop To be sure these gentlemen still speak for property, but they seem to be oblivious of the established rules for the established games and, worse, unable to establish new games in which the older dominants may join on reasonable terms!

I trust the point is made, though much too briefly It is by analyzing the dynamic of different forms of production (and such quasi-economic structures as the bureaucracy) individually, by locating 'classes' in each separately, and by examining their interactions in such 'third party' arenas as legislatures, bureaucracies, and universities that we may be able to return analytically to the 'whole' of Indian society.

12 B S Baviskar, 'Cooperatives and caste in Maharashtra a case study' *Sociological Bulletin*, 1969, 18 148-66, Jan Breman, 'Seasonal migration and cooperative capitalism crushing of cane and of labour by sugar factories of Bardoli' *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1978, 13 1317-60

13 See Ch 2 in M Glucksmann, *Structuralist Analysis in Contemporary Social Thought*, 1974, London, Routledge



The previous section began with the production process and considered the structures of interests and referred to the ideologies associated with them. Along this analytic route I have difficulty with at least one major phenomenon in the structure of Indian society, that is communalism, especially that across the Hindu/Muslim line. To reach the core of this phenomenon, in my view, one has to travel not only via the structure of interests during the colonial period and later, but also via the beliefs, traditions, and symbols which have all been implicated in the social bounding of these interests.

Why have we not tried the latter route over the past generation? Partly, I think, because most of us found religion generally to be more or less malodorous and tended to dismiss it, usually without understanding it, believing that the smell would ultimately disperse. M N Srinivas's *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of Southern India* (1952) was a somewhat exceptional work, but it examined belief and ritual in a group well within the Hindu fold, and religion was seen here in terms of the classical sociological concern with moral order. From there to the Hindu/Muslim boundary, the transition is not immediately obvious, for the boundary has rather more of moral disorder.<sup>17</sup>

There are papers by T N Madan and Marc Gaborieau<sup>18</sup> which consider this boundary, and while these have a crucial bearing on the issue, their focus is on local communities. Similarly with Partap Aggarwal's major study of a Meo village,<sup>19</sup> where the landowning Meo are reported to have acted, until the riots of 1947, as villagers more than as Muslims — and in reverse order

17 Similarly the series on the other side of the boundary edited by Imtiaz Ahmad, *Caste and Social Stratification Among the Muslims* (1973) and *Family, Kinship and Marriage among Muslims in India* (1976).

18 In *Contributions to Indian sociology*, n.s. 1972, 6, reissued as T N Madan, ed., *Muslim Communities of South Asia*, (1976), New Delhi, Vikas.

19 P C Aggarwal, *Caste, Religion and Power*, 1971, New Delhi, Shri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations.

afterwards, the analysis refers to Aligarh, *tabligue* and so forth but the anchor necessarily lies in the village.

Quite understandably, these do not show the logic whereby these local expressions get interconnected and add up in the wider scene. In many localities, and even regions, the Hindu/Muslim relations can be explained substantially in terms of interests too,<sup>20</sup> but how the *disparate* interests in the localities and regions coalesce into the kind of cleavage that led to the Partition directs attention to another logic.

That logic arises at the confluence of two phenomenal streams which, given the limits of space, I can trace here only in bare outline. Religious identities arise, if a tautology is permitted, in religious origins. Modern historiography is beginning to show that, at the time of the initial promulgation, the initial ideas of the great religious traditions arose in sharp intuitive insight into the prophet's own social milieu, showing for example how to reorder the framework of social relations so as to accommodate the changing structures of interests more adequately.<sup>21</sup> In the prevailing struggle between competing sets of ideas, the evidence of a prophet's extraordinary experiences, possibly of the supernatural, would give his message an edge, sometimes decisively.

Later generations would amplify and systematize the prophet's message, defining friend and foe for the believer, prescribing the routines to organize numerous concurrent time-cycles, allaying one's anxieties on life, on death, and on life after death. A religious tradition is, or

20 D N Dhanagare, 'Agrarian conflict, religion and politics: the Moplah rebellions in Malabar in the 19th and early 20th centuries', *Past and Present*, 1977, 74, 112-41; Ramkrishna Mukherjee, 'Social background of Bangladesh' In K Gough and H P Sharma, eds., *Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia*, 1973, New York: Monthly Review Press.

21 For the rise of Islam, W Montgomery Watt, *Islam and the Integration of Society*, 1961, London: Routledge; and Maxime Rodinson, *Mohammed*, 1971, Penguin; for Buddha, D D Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, 1965, London: Routledge, pp. 104-13.

used to be, like a compass, helping one chart a course through life. It used to be a sanctified manual, listing the do's and don'ts for coping with the universe.<sup>22</sup>

Operative in multireligious societies would be multiple manuals, prescribing divergent codes for life. Does one's sacred duty lie in worshipping idols and cows, or does it lie in breaking or eating them? Answers to such questions have often been important to religious traditions — and bases for actual or potential turmoil, so that, for orderly living, it helped to recognize that other people lived by other codes, that the religious affiliation was important in each other's social identities.<sup>23</sup> Seemingly complete social harmony could thus coexist at one level with a complete, though normally silent, rejection of each other's codes for life at another level. Social, or religious, identities have often been seen to mean, implicitly, identities of interests, in ways cutting across the economically indicated frameworks of interests.

This phenomenal stream ran into another, arising in the infrastructures of colonialism noted earlier. The subcontinental administration, the grids of railways and other communications, the court law, and the expanded flow of colonial commerce — all these facilitated an enlargement in the scale of social relations, though this enlargement was realized in a highly uneven manner at different points of society.<sup>24</sup> Much wider social horizons opened up at least to some of those who moved around. This wider social universe conferred some comparative advantages if one could activate widely dispersed linkages and, in more or less politi-

22 See Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*, 1968, New Haven, Yale University Press.

23 The compasses and manuals for many today come from *secular* understandings of nature and society, of life and death, and of one's inner world. Rather recent, and not always satisfactory, these are in any case accessible to but a tiny fraction of Indians.

24 See my 'Inequality in colonial India', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 1979, 13, 241-64.



cal contexts, if one could claim to speak for large numbers

Consequently, since way back in the 19th century, social identities have often been reconstituted through enlargement,<sup>25</sup> as in the caste associations and federations. In similar vein, it was the possibility of appealing simultaneously to the religiously marked symbols and glory and fears — sometimes in aged folk memory — and to some contemporary experience, that permitted wide-ranging mobilization among Muslims, overriding great divergences of material interest. A full treatment would consider too the contribution made, for example, by the logic of the caste system which, over most of the subcontinent, equated Muslims with untouchables in Hindu thought and practice. Whatever one may think of the caste system, and whatever the untouchables may have thought of the equation, it could not have brought a Muslim much comfort or reassurance. Several mechanisms stocking mutual antagonisms have operated historically across the Hindu/Muslim boundary.

To conclude finding ways to come to terms with the enormous complexity of Indian society has to head the sociological agenda. The interplay of interests and ideas, in the historical context of colonialism with large precolonial carryovers, is one possible node, but we could also use some logics to take us from the 'whole' of Indian society to its parts — and then back again. I have proposed two. One notes the structures of interests distinctive to the several Indian forms of production, and the juxtaposition of people and ideas, formed in different milieux, and the consequences thereof for social struggles and institutional continuity. Material interests, however, are socially bounded in particular ways through beliefs, relationships, traditions, and symbols, and the associated social identities may also define social opposition in a manner obscuring the structure of material interests. There is no need to foreclose certain directions of enquiry and understanding by prejudging the issue one way or the other.

# The social reality

N JAYARAM

'To understand what sociology is all about, one has to look at oneself from a distance, to see oneself as one human being among others. For, sociology is concerned with problems of society, and society is something formed by oneself and other people together, the person who studies and thinks about society is himself a member of it'.<sup>1</sup>

AN important dimension of the crisis confronting contemporary sociology concerns directly 'the person of the sociologist, his self-image as a professional and his basic commitment as a citizen. After all, it is through individual sociologists that sociology lives and expresses itself in the world.'<sup>2</sup> Viewed in this light, it is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance of introspection on the part of the sociologist about the nature of the enterprise in which he is involved. In this essay I shall present a personalized review of my acquaintance with sociology for over twelve years now a dialectical movement from what I was *taught* as sociology during my student days, through how what I *learnt* since then helped me

1 Norbert Elias, *What is Sociology?*, 1978, London, Hutchinson, p. 13

2 Franco Ferrarotti, 'Introductory Comments on the Theme: Is There a Crisis in Sociology?', In Tom Bottomore, ed., *Crisis and Contention in Sociology*, 1975, London Sage, p. 16



react to it, to what I feel it should be

I was first introduced to sociology in 1967, and I should confess that my induction into sociology, both at the under and post-graduate levels, was accidental. In retrospect, I wonder if I learnt any sociology worth the name in my B A course. I cannot also see any meaningful link between sociology taught at the under and post-graduate levels. Let me briefly recapitulate what I was taught.

Sociology, we were told, is a science of society, and society is a web of social relationship. What this flagrantly loose definition meant was not clarified. That one can define the subject matter of a discipline by reference to what its practitioners really study is both tenuous and misleading in the case of sociology. The subject matter is amorphous in nature spreading over marriage and magic to space-travel and public lavatories. As D P Mukherji has rightly said 'Sociology has a floor and a ceiling, like any other science, but its speciality consists in its floor being the ground floor of all types of social disciplines, and its ceiling remaining open to the sky'.<sup>3</sup> Any damn thing with the prefix 'sociology of' can go under the scope of sociology, don't we have sociologies of cinema, odours and the absurd?

What is more striking is that in no introductory course is the need for sociology as a distinct field of study established in a logical and realistic way. While this is only to be expected, given the vagueness of the definition of sociology, it is astonishing to note the cornerstone of sociology dislodged from its foundation, which was so painstakingly laid by the classical sociologists. It is hardly possible to answer the question 'what is sociology' independently of the question 'why sociology'.

Whatever may be the subject matter of sociology, its nature was altered by our teachers to be scien-

tific, though as a science it has certain unique features and peculiar problems, and it is therefore unlike the natural sciences. In the discussion of the scientific nature of sociology much emphasis was laid on methods, with absolutely no reference to the nature of social reality. Also, discussion of the ontological and epistemological issues involved was conspicuous by its absence.

One implication of characterising sociology as a science deserves some comment. Science, it was said, eschews values, as values contaminate the soul of science. Therefore, sociology as a science should be value-free. It was clarified that values form an objective part of social reality, and that in the analysis of some sociologists like Parsons they form the core. But as scientists-in-the-making, we were asked to guard against values hindering the 'objective' understanding of social reality, and to scrupulously avoid evaluations and controversy.

Given the uncritical acceptance of sociology as a science, it is easy to anticipate the role expectations of a sociologist who is depicted as a 'scientist' with extensive knowledge about society and about the theory and method of analysing and interpreting social reality. As a scientist he is a dispassionate observer or chronicler and, at best, a social analyst. Since his subject is a science, he has not only to guard against values colouring what he studies, but also to refrain from passing judgements about what he observes and analyses. The scientific commandment 'thou shalt not commit a value judgement' consigned him to be a non-partisan — *dolce far niente* — on social issues.

No doubt, this raises the question of the uses of sociology which it is said, has an applied aspect to it, as against the basic or pure aspect. Applied sociology is concerned with the application of the perspectives of and the knowledge obtained from pure or basic sociology in maintaining or ordering a society. How applied sociology tackles the problem of values was left to conjecture. Perhaps the very distinction

between pure and applied sociology is drawn to camouflage the ugly head of values!<sup>4</sup>

An important part of any science is theory. In sociology, it was said, there are many divergent, and often competing theoretical frameworks which help the sociologist in his research. It was assured that the existence of a plurality of theories does not mar the scientific status of sociology. According to this view, the role of theory is at best that of an explanatory device, and so there is nothing inherently superior or inferior about any theory. But is the ontological status of the assumptions underlying the competing theories the same? Can 'scientific' theory be a matter of convenience and exigency? There was silence on these questions.

Among the chief theoretical frameworks considered were the structural and functional theories, symbolic interactionism, the conflict theory and their variants. Set by the blinkers of science we were goaded to believe that the ultimate theoretical ambition of sociology is to develop a general theory of society — *a la* Parsonian structural-functionalism — which is free from the constraints of time and space.

The ideological trap of structural-functionalism, well placed behind the smoke-screen of 'science', is best exemplified by the substantive issues that were covered in the course — such as kinship organization and changing joint family, caste system and san kritization, functions of religion and types of religious experience, community development and factional politics, conditions of stable democracy and end of ideology, etc., — and in the books that were prescribed for study — as for instance Thomas O'Dea's *Sociology of Religion*, William Goode's *Family*, and Seymour Lip-

4. Martin Shaw has argued that 'the separation of thought as "pure" (and hence "non-Ideological") is in fact a hallmark of ideology. For thought is always the thought of men, i.e., of practical beings thought which is unaware of its own practical basis is thought which cannot conceive of a different basis and so accepts the limitations of existing forms'. See his, *Marxism and Social Science* 1975, London, Pluto Press, p. 64.

3. Quoted in Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *Sociology of Indian Sociology*, 1979, Bombay, Allied, p. 36.



set's *Political Man*. In brief, the approach to social reality was pronouncedly a-historical, and most of the issues were discussed in an abstract and isolated fashion, without reference to their spatio-temporal context. Not surprisingly, the whole course was anti-Marx in orientation.

How social change was analysed from this theoretical stance deserves some attention here. Social change, it was said, is the product of a series of small-scale gradual alterations in various facets of society, which is characterized by some sort of a dynamic equilibrium, though at times change could be swift and far-reaching as, for instance, in periods of famine and pestilence, war and revolution, etc. Also, there is no single factor responsible for social change, i.e., multifactor causality of social change was upheld. Obviously, the dialectical conception of social change and development was dubbed deterministic and therefore unscientific.

I mentioned earlier that while characterizing the nature of sociology as a science much emphasis was laid on the systematic nature of the study, or what is fashionably called research methodology. We were told that sociology follows the 'scientific method', by which was meant the paraphernalia surrounding the techniques of research design, formulation of hypothesis, preparation of questionnaire, sampling, editing, coding, tabulation, statistical analysis, etc. Very little emphasis was laid on the logic and philosophy of social sciences. Thus, methodology was identified with research tools and techniques.<sup>5</sup>

Of all the so-called methods, survey analysis was singled out for special consideration, as this alone seems to meet *par excellence* the 'scientific' prescriptions associated with tools and techniques. The other methods were juxtaposed to survey analysis and relegated to the secondary position for want of me-

thodological rigour on their part. Interestingly, 'the philosophical dispute between "objective" (cause) and "subjective" (meaning) approaches to sociology leads generally to different kinds of surveys, not to a questioning of survey analysis'.<sup>6</sup> We could not help feeling that sociological research is coterminous with survey analysis.<sup>7</sup>

What accounts for the immense popularity of this 'abstracted empiricism' in sociology, as Mills<sup>8</sup> calls it, is the belief that it along with 'grand theory' completes the scientific edifice of sociology. But, the scientific claims of sociology resting on empiricism are on slippery ground. Abstracted empiricism 'flatters to deceive by cloaking the poverty of its reduction of sociological problems to the responses of individuals in unquestioned situations with impressive looking, but misapplied, quantitative methods'.<sup>9</sup>

A prerequisite for learning sociology which I began only after completing my Master's degree, was delearning the type of sociology that I had been taught as a student — a process which is as yet incomplete. I chose the reciprocal relationship between education and social structure as the area for my doctoral research. The problem was conceptualized in terms of social stratification, focussing on the bearing of social inequality on educational inequality, and the way in which the latter reinforces the former. Reading the literature on educational inequalities, social stratification and mobility, I realised the complexity of the theme that I was considering as also its numerous dimensions. Collecting the data, I became aware of the inadequacies of survey analysis. And writing the

thesis, I recognised the importance of socio-historical and macro-perspective for a comprehensive understanding of the theme.

The Workshop on Research Methodology, sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research and held at the University of Saugar during October-December 1974, provided me a forum to buoy up some of the issues pertaining to fact, theory and method of sociology that had been bothering me. The discussions at this Workshop convinced me of the serious limitations of structural functionalism, especially as applied to the Indian setting. The reiteration at this Workshop of the definition of methodology as having to do with tools and techniques provoked me to examine the scientific pretensions of the tools and techniques and helped me refine my questions on the philosophy of social sciences. I got disenchanted with the axiom that quantification is science, and became extremely critical both of quantification of the non-quantifiables and of quantification for its own sake.

I should confess that then my ideas were quite unsettled and as such I was unable to take a firm stand on many issues. But I was developing misgivings about the conception of sociology that I had been provided as a student and these misgivings were manifested in the form of unguided criticism of practically every idea that was put forward. To many of my friends and teachers it appeared as though I was indulging in criticism for criticism's sake, and badly at that. To me anyway everything was in a state of confusion, and I would not aver that things are much clearer now.

It was with this confused mind that I entered teaching. For self clarification I read some of the works of the classical sociologists and of their interpreters. Teaching helped me to broaden my perspective and to make my questions more incisive. Slowly I started groping for some sort of a frame into which I could fix my views, which I outline now.

At its birth, sociology broadly addressed itself to the twin social

5 Andre Beteille has rightly questioned the relevance of teaching research methodology — even of this distorted type — to post-graduate students. See his, The Teaching of Sociology in India, *Sociological Bulletin*, 1973, 22: 216-233.

6 Shaw, *op cit*, p. 36

7 Some sociologists in effect identify survey analysis with sociology. Paul Lazarsfeld begins his analysis of the trends in sociology with a discussion of survey analysis (*Main Trends in Sociology*, 1970, Harper and Row, pp. 10-22).

8 C Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, 1959, New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 50-75.

9 Christopher G.A. Bryant, *Sociology in Action*, 1976, London, George Allen and Unwin, p. 309.



realities of order and change Comte explicitly spoke of these two aspects of sociological concern as 'statics' and 'dynamics' The essence of society is so well embodied in these contradictory realities that they cannot be effaced without destroying the fabric of society itself And sociology would lose its *raison d'être* once these contradictory realities cease if there is only order, then there is no need for a continuous study of it and, on the other hand, if change is so swift and incessant as to preclude any order at all, then it would be difficult, nay impossible, to study society In fact, no sociologist has spoken of a change from order to orderlessness or chaos, and they have all invariably stressed the transition from one order to another

That order and change are problems central to sociological analysis does not necessarily mean that they have or should be given the same analytical status For any given society at any given point of time the problem of order or of change may be relatively more crucial, and the scope of sociology in that society may be defined accordingly In brief, 'sociology can never wholly escape the influence of the whole culture in which it is embedded and which shapes in manifold ways its background assumptions and preoccupations',<sup>10</sup> and, therefore, the scope of sociology is relative to the spatio-temporal context of the society in which it exists

Whether it is order or change that a sociologist chooses in defining the scope of sociology in his society is definitely an ideological decision rather than a scientific one, though there may be sufficient factual or logical justification for his choice Also, in the same society, it may be the problem of order which is at the core of sociology at one time, and that of change at another This is clearly depicted in Dahrendorf's plea for a reorientation of sociological analysis from the integration model to the coercion or conflict model and in the new found love of Eastern European sociologists for

the Parsonian structural-functionalism

This has one implication in that the status of sociology may be evaluated more as an ideology than as a science Let us gracefully accept such an evaluation, instead of wrangling over the claim of sociology to be a science I may sound pessimistic about the scientific possibility of sociology Not in the least I am only apprehensive of the perils of the scientific pretensions of sociology, and the latent consequences of the subterfuge that such a pretension has taken One thing that the students of sociology should be wary of is the 'scientism' of their subject

In the present context of India, I feel, the central concern of sociology should be with the problem of change The colonial experience which the country has undergone, the nature and problems of its development, the extremities of accumulation and deprivation that have taken place, the contradictions between traditional ethos and modern economic formation that have emerged, the type and intensity of social conflicts that are witnessed, the resilience of some of its traditional institutions and practices, the proclivity for authoritarianism that is manifest, and the weak string of integration that is sustained despite extensive heterogeneity and disintegrative forces should suffice to justify shifting our sociological analysis away from its hitherto obsessive preoccupation with the problem of order

It is true that the 'modernisers' among the Indian sociologists, as Mukherjee calls them, have focused on social change But both their theoretical framework and methodological strategy suffered from serious weaknesses they 'could not evaluate objectively and comprehensively the relative relevance and efficiency of all available theories .. in order to explain the dynamics of the Indian social organism And, consequently, they could not produce any important sociological theory on the basis of a precise and comprehensive appraisal of reality in India alone or in conjunction with the homologous and analogous societies, like those in the subconti-

nent of India, the Third World, and so on'<sup>11</sup>

It is obvious that Indian society has undergone and is undergoing change But in what direction it is changing, who is leading the changes, in whose interest and at what price — are some of the serious questions for which there is very little sociological answer. I feel that sociologists should at least now make an earnest and concerted effort at answering these questions, failing which it will not be too long before they lose their academic and social credibility

The structural-functional framework is not only inadequate but also latently dangerous for answering those questions on social change Its very conception of social change is narrow and self-limiting and, in fact, its inability to explain the crisis in western society has been identified as a chief source of crisis in sociology there<sup>12</sup> What we need is an historico-philosophical analysis of social reality, rather than a static and pseudo-scientific one The Marxian dialectical conception of social history appears to be an useful choice in this context While there are many reasons steering us to this choice,<sup>13</sup> one of its virtues is worthy of special mention here it seeks to comprehend social reality in the coordinates of space and time, and it underscores the point that without profound historical comparisons it is not possible to understand the nature of social change In Indian sociology the theoretical relevance of Marx, and of his key interpreters, has not

11 Mukherjee, *op cit*, p 53, also pp 52-54, 77, and 87-88

12 See Ivan Kuvacic, *Sociology and Social Integration*, in Tom Bottomore, ed, *Crisis and Contention in Sociology*, *op cit*, pp 71-83

13 According to I S Kon, the appeal of Marxism to students of sociology who are looking for answers to questions of our time lies in its macro-sociological level of analysis, its concern with objective deep rooted social processes and structures, its dialectical model of society, its historicism in the interpretation of social phenomena, and its revolutionary-critical tendency See his, *The Crisis of Western Sociology and the Second Discovery of Marxism*, in Tom Bottomore, ed, *Crisis and Contention in Sociology*, *op cit*, pp 63-64

10 Tom Bottomore, Preface, In his, ed, *Crisis and Contention in Sociology*, *op cit*, p 8



received the consideration it rightfully deserves

Next, the orientation has to shift from micro to macro study. The extraordinary limitations of small-scale studies with absolutely no generalising tendency can hardly be exaggerated. For instance, we have far too many micro-cosmic village studies in India, but do we have any meaningful body of generalisations from them? The idea that scientificity of sociology will be buttressed or enhanced by analysing interpersonal relations in small and isolated settings is mythical. The same could be said of studies on organizations like schools, hospitals, industries, etc. Not that I deny the significance of such studies entirely only that they have failed to show how the ramifications of the phenomenon or process studied are relevant to the society as a whole. This warrants a redefinition, in the sense of asking a different set of questions in the fragmented sociologies of education, medicine, industry, etc.

As regards methodology, the emphasis should shift from tools and techniques to an examination of the logical structure and the philosophical problems of sociology. The obsessive preoccupation with survey analysis should cease. I do not mean to consider interview and observation or sampling and statistical analysis as useless or irrelevant. But I am certainly opposed to tying sociology's claim to be a science to these tools and techniques, and more so to the view that only those problems should be studied where these tools and techniques do apply. Effort should be made to avail of the historical method, to refine our philosophical base, and to encourage debate on the political implications of sociological research.

**N**ow, what is the use of sociology and what is the role of the sociologist? To me, the purpose of sociology appears to be an informed and intelligent social criticism, and the role of the sociologist is that of a social critic. The sociologist should appear to be an original, authentic part of sociology, a study of social crisis, and

it is doubtful if sociology can be anything but critical.<sup>14</sup>

It is true that criticism may offend the existing consciousness. But criticism which 'seizes upon the discrepancy between the truth as the sociologist sees it and ideology, official opinion, myth, popular opinion, etc',<sup>15</sup> and which is directed at eradicating 'false consciousness' should be welcome. Since ultimately it is men who constitute society, they should know what actually is happening in society, who is steering it where it is being taken and how all this affects them. As Coulson and Riddell have succinctly expressed 'the purpose of sociology is not to build a closed system of determinate laws, but by scientific study, to enable people to become aware of some of the social reasons for the social problems they experience, to be able to direct attention to appropriate sorts of remedies for them'.<sup>16</sup>

**T**his means that a sociologist should avoid arid isolation from the people whom he studies, i.e., he cannot be an a-social being, as his role as a 'scientist' would want him to be. The conception of sociology as social criticism and that of the sociologist as a social critic raises two interrelated questions: can a sociologist be a critic and should he take an active part in the happenings of his society? Let me answer the second question first.

Some amount of social activism is implied in the very definition of the role of the sociologist as a social critic. As mentioned earlier, ultimately he is a member of the society, and the very fact that he selects a particular problem for study itself reveals that he is involved. Is it moral turpitude for a

sociologist to take active part in steering a social process or in affecting its course? 'As a human being has the sociologist no concern for the world that is to be?'<sup>17</sup> In fact, escaping under the guise of scientific detachment and value-neutrality, I would hold, is a sinister sociological sin, a sort of betrayal of fellow human beings.

**T**he other question centres round value-preference, that being a social critic the sociologist loses his scientific purity and gets ideologically polluted. Earlier I mentioned that the very determination of the central concern of sociology entails values and that it is a choice governed more by ideology than by science. I repeat sociology is not only not value-free, but also it should not be value-free. The whole claim of value-free sociology is a doctrine of hypocrisy, cowardice, and irresponsibility, and would prove to be 'theoretically untenable, practically unrealistic and morally disastrous'.<sup>18</sup> From the choice of a problem through analysis to the final listing of implications, at every stage we have to choose and our choice is definitely governed by values and these are amenable to judgment in moral terms. But it is in our interest that we make our values clear, so that we are not misunderstood.

Finally, a systematic socio-historical probing into the social processes at the macro level would necessitate free floor-crossing amongst such varied disciplines as history, economics, psychology, anthropology, demography, etc. The resulting inter-disciplinary interaction, we can anticipate, may result in the loss of its distinctiveness by sociology (if it has any!), and the possibility of 'an end to sociology' has already been raised.<sup>19</sup> May be, this is a welcome step in the direction of a comprehensive understanding of social reality. After all we are concerned primarily with society and only secondarily with sociology!

17 *Ibid.*, p 110

18 *Ibid.*, p 111

19 See Norman Birnbaum, 'An End to Sociology?', In Tom Bottomore, ed., *Crisis and Contention in Sociology*, op cit, pp 169-215

14 Elias argues that all 'scientifically thinking groups are generally groups which criticize or reject the dominant and commonly accepted ideas of their society, even when these are upheld by recognized authorities, for they have found that they do not correspond to the observable fact. In other words, scientists are destroyers of myths' and the same is true of sociologists, see his, *op cit*, p 52

15 Bryant, *op cit*, p 319

16 Margaret A. Coulson and Carol Riddell, *Approaching Sociology*, 1970, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, p. 16



# Search for identity

D N DHANAGARE

LIKE an accomplished sadhu who is hesitant to disclose his family origins and antecedents, professional sociologists are often wary of facing squarely the refractory question what is sociology? Not that this question has precise answers on which there can be unanimity. In fact, most leading sociologists in India, as elsewhere, would feel embarrassed if confronted with such an intriguing and equally vexing question. I am reminded of an historic moment when a non-professional came to the rescue of professional sociologists who have always been in search of a proper self-definition and identity. At the Ninth World Congress of Sociology, held at the picturesque campus of the University of Uppsala in Sweden (August 1978), the mayoress of Uppsala, while welcoming the delegates, commented on the printed programme of sessions of various panels, working groups, research committees and the like. The programme itself ran into over 300 pages.<sup>1</sup> Its contents reveal that sociology is everything and everything is sociology', — she observed to everyone's delight.

However innocuous the remark may sound to those who look to sociology more with a sense of vanity than with social commitment, it truly epitomizes the present impasse, identity crisis and the lack of direction in the field of sociology in India as elsewhere.

The nature of such a crisis in western sociology has been under discussion and diagnosis for some time now. Partly the crisis in sociology simply portrays 'a modern society in which identity itself is

uncertain and in flux'.<sup>2</sup> In such a society its members continually attempt, not always successfully, to adapt to their everchanging roles that are often mutually inconsistent and conflicting.

Hence, any attempt towards 'understanding men in society' (as sociology is sometimes defined) would not be free from contradictions inherent in the very object of understanding. These conflicts and contradictions in the social matrix get reflected in the idiom of social theory which, says Alvin Gouldner, is in a state of utter crisis.<sup>3</sup> The crisis characterizes all academic sociology and more so the whole spectrum of sociological theories ranging from functionalism to different varieties of Marxism.

To what extent did sociology in India experience the vibrations of this crisis? and how has the discipline or the organised profession responded to it? In India the development of sociology as an academic discipline and its institutionalization in universities have followed a zigzag course. In the pre-independence era, the colonial interests unmistakably shaped the initial attempts to understand Indian society — its cultural as well as structural angularities. That sociology and social anthropology appeared in Indian universities on this colonial backdrop<sup>4</sup> must be borne in

<sup>2</sup> P L Berger, *Invitation to Sociology — A Humanistic Perspective* New York Anchor, 1963, pp 48-49.

<sup>3</sup> A W Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* New York Basic Books, Inc, 1970, particularly preface, also pp 341-410.

<sup>4</sup> For the colonial origins of Indian sociology and social anthropology see K. Gough, 'Anthropology child of Imperialism', *Monthly Review*, 19 (11), 1966, pp 12-27, also by her, *Towards an Anthropology* London Monthly Review Press, 1975.

<sup>1</sup> For details see 19th World Congress of Sociology Programme—*Paths of Social Development*, Uppsala University, Sweden, August 14-19, 1978.



mind constantly. Then only will it be possible to assess what sociology in India has been like, what strength or deficiencies it has revealed so far and what tasks are ahead for sociologists in India.

Initially, more dominant social science partners treated sociology as a 'residual category' and consequently it was relegated to a subordinate position in the organizational structures of universities. By sheer historical accidents sociology came to be tagged on to economics in some universities and to anthropology, politics or social work in others. Sociology's academic fate or fortune hinged partly on its perceived functional utility, and partly on how well-entrenched the 'big brothers' were in the local power structures of their universities. In my opinion, the image of sociology in India could rarely outgrow this initial rickety constitution despite sumptuous nourishment since the early 1950's,

**S**ociology in India initially emulated several models depending upon which disciplinary 'master' it had to serve under. It became necessary to adopt the conceptual apparatus, phraseology and even methodological equipment of those disciplines with whom sociology had to strike a symbiotic relationship in order first to survive and then to thrive. Its research interests sometimes centred around themes like 'socio-economic conditions of...' if it happened to be a part of an economics department. Numerous ethnic groups — castes, sub-castes, clans or tribes — figured predominantly in its concerns where sociology had to enter into wedlock with anthropology. When it had to grow under the shelter of 'social work', professional sociologists devoted themselves to studying the problems of the handicapped — physically or otherwise, of juvenile delinquents, of prostitutes and destitutes, and of most hackneyed 'worker-related problems' in industrial concerns.

diverse ties of Indian he last with 'social' have been the most

damaging, for it encouraged sociologists to view contemporary social problems in terms not of social structure or process but of social pathology. 'Problems' were inherently bad, aberrations, 'dysfunctional to the system' and hence requiring 'eradication'.<sup>5</sup> It is noteworthy that the acceptance of such value-premises was far from conscious: these were quietly absorbed in universities and institutions where one found an academic home. The sociologist did not define his own roles, he received them for performance from his placement.

Being conditioned to be at the receiving end, Indian sociology could not come of age. Like an aged infant it failed to develop its own identity even after the 1950s when the discipline and the institutionalized profession witnessed phenomenal expansion. Noticeable during this expansion was a shift of concerns from the 'city' to the 'country-side', coinciding with the rise of 'community development'. But with that, Indian sociology got saddled with the stereotyped theme of 'The impact of community development on...', which came to dominate the research priorities of Indian sociology.

It was primarily the official patronage which enticed quite a few sociologists and social anthropologists to embrace this interest. Not that there was anything inherently wrong with this growing edge of the discipline. But then the State practically dictated research priorities and the policy concerns came to echo in sociology seminars and conferences. It can be surmised that at least some of the top professional sociologists in India espoused 'community development', perhaps angling for a share in the State's policy-formulation and thereby for extra-academic power within the State apparatus.

**T**he parasitic, satellite existence of sociology has produced some side-effects. As status-seekers,

<sup>5</sup> This remark by C Wright Mills on the American sociology in the 1940s and 1950 applies to the experience of Indian sociology as well. See C Wright Mills, *Power, Politics and People* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1962), pp 525-552.

Indian sociologists got used to accepting conceptual frameworks handed down to them, together with attendant sets of values, as given and not as a matter of critical evaluation. Consequently, there was very little creative involvement in social theory. There are, of course, notable exceptions (D P Mukerji, Ramkrishna Mukherjee, A R Desai, Y B Damle and Yogendra Singh, to mention a few) but their impact on Indian sociology was negligible. By and large the tendency was to use sociological theory ritually in empirical research, which really contributed very little to theory construction or even to the development of conceptual alternatives in the study of Indian social realities.

**S**ince theoretical concerns did not figure very prominently in the practice of sociology in India, the kind of crisis that characterized western sociology, particularly in the realm of theory, did not produce any reverberations in Indian sociology at all. Basically we find an abysmal lack of curiosity about anything very much, and that included the relevance of the theoretical advances in western social science for understanding Indian society. Maybe our social backgrounds and origins made us think that we did not need that kind of creative involvement in social theory for coping with the environment. Or it may be that the academic pecking order inhibited the breaking of ranks. The near-absence of theoretical concerns resulted in an inadequate understanding of society.

During the 1950s and 1960s, sociology on the Anglo-American and the European scenario was being swept by major transformations in ideas that came like the tidal waves of intellectual movements. Structural-functionalism underwent complete metamorphosis, different shades of structuralism, represented by Leach and Levi-Strauss, Althusser and Sartre were permeating the intellectual traditions in Europe and elsewhere, varieties of Marxism, existentialism and structuralism were being blended with one another, and a whole range of new developments within 'symbolic interactionism', the phenomenological school and in the



Frankfurt School of sociology were taking place<sup>6</sup>

While these critical developments were reshaping western sociology, Indian sociologists were still debating whether 'sociology for India' was a more appropriate formulation than either 'sociology in India' or 'of India'.<sup>7</sup> Their academic concerns were stagnant, and the profession wallowed complacently in studies of caste, tribe, village, marriage, family and kinship. However eminent an Indian sociologist might otherwise be, 'the sociology establishment' in India rarely considered him literate enough to be invited to seminars if he had not studied either 'kinship structure', 'caste' or at least a 'village'. The very narrowness of these interests obviated the need for theory which concerns general relationships seen apart from particular contexts, one is driven to theory when the contexts of enquiry are diversified. *Indian sociologists in some ways forestalled the need for theory by stereotyping the contexts of research*

Like their ambivalence to theory, another striking feature of many Indian sociologists was their obsession for microcosmic empirical investigations of social settings. So great was that obsession that 'field-work' phase became a geographic metaphor and 'my village' became the Indian village. Whether it was Shamirpet or Rampura, Shivpur or Ramgarhi, these were either projected or perceived as quintessentially Indian villages.

The gap between the micro-setting (the object of direct observation) and the macro-setting of the pan-Indian society (for which abstractions and generalizations are made) was too wide to be filled by isolated, and often unrelated, empirical investigations on social microcosms. But

the gap has not deterred some from composing grandiose profiles of macro-social processes in Indian society by using stray micro-level findings.<sup>8</sup> In fact, not only is there a wide gap between 'micro' and 'macro' but also sometimes the two may show contrary tendencies.

This is true not only in the Indian context but in any situation of multi-level complexity where it is impossible for a 'locality' to be a representative microcosm of the whole. Saberwal, for example, found noticeable social mobility among the scheduled castes in a Punjabi town but later confessed that the all-India situation did not really correspond to that rosy picture.<sup>9</sup>

Theoretical orientation was, however, not totally missing in Indian sociology. An overwhelming majority of Indian sociologists had found 'structural-functionalism' as an intellectually challenging as well as a satisfying framework. At a seminar held at the Agra University Institute of Social Sciences in the 1960s, most of the present-day stalwarts in Indian sociology acknowledged structural-functionalism as the most appropriate theoretical framework for understanding Indian society and social institutions.<sup>10</sup> Other perspectives — whether the Marxian, Weberian or Parsonian — were often rejected without even an acquaintance. Some isolated sociologists like the late D P Mukerji and A R Desai, plough the lonely furrow of Marxian sociology<sup>11</sup> as Y B Damle and a few others did with the Parsonian framework.<sup>12</sup>

The purpose here is not either to undermine the importance of 'structural-functionalism' or even to attempt a critique, but simply to draw attention to the peculiar development of sociology in India. With the acceptance of 'structural-functionalism' as an intellectual creed, sociologists tended to focus on the present structures of social relations and institutional arrangements as 'harmonic systems' and failed to highlight the conflicting forces and contradictions inherent in those systems.

This total immersion in the 'present' very subtly alienated us from history. Indian society and social institutions have had a long evolutionary history but most of the professional sociologists were over-committed to 'functionalism' as mentioned before. Their interest was confined to understanding only the present structures and functional interdependence among their parts. This resulted in the neglect of the socio-historical perspective which would have enriched our understanding of Indian society — its past and present problems and future prospects or directions of development.

Nothing could substantiate this point better than the confessions of an eminent Indian sociologist and social anthropologist:

'In course of time I became an enthusiastic convert to functionalism *a la* Radcliffe-Brown. I had the feeling that I had at last found a theoretical framework which was satisfactory but like all new converts I was fanatic. I suppressed my natural scepticism, one of my few real assets, to accept such dogmas as the irrelevance of history for sociological explanation, the unimportance of culture and the existence of universal laws.'<sup>13</sup>

Although the lack of awareness of the relevance of history for sociological inquiries was characteristic of the pre-1970 phase of Indian sociology, some like Ramkrishna Mukherjee, A R Desai and a few others did use history fruit-

6 John Rex (ed.), *Approaches to Sociology: An Introduction to Major Trends in British Sociology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974).

7 For example, see *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (old series), No. I (1957), pp. 7-41, No. III (1959), pp. 88-101, and No. IV (1960), pp. 82-89, also see T K N Unnithan, Y Singh, N K Singh and I Dev (eds.), *Sociology for India* (New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India, 1967).

8 See, for example, M N Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1966).

9 S Saberwal, 'Sociologists and inequality in India: The historical context', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 14 (1979), pp. 243-54.

10 See *Sociology in India* (Seminar, 10-15 December 1964-Report), Institute of Social Sciences, Agra University, Agra, 1965.

11 D P Mukerji, *Diversities* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1958), A R Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (Bombay: Popular, 1976).

12 Y B Damle, 'For a theory of Indian Sociology', in *Sociology in India* (Seminar report), *op. cit.*, pp. 32-52.

13 M N Srinivas, 'Itineraries of an Indian social anthropologist', *International Social Science Journal*, XXV, 1-2 (1973), p. 141.



fully<sup>14</sup> More recently Yogendra Singh in his study of modernization,<sup>15</sup> Saberwal in his assessment of the colonial impact on urbanism, and social inequalities,<sup>16</sup> Partha N Mukherjee, Rajendra Singh and a number of younger sociologists, who have of late taken to studies on protest movements and revolts of the peasants, workers and the weaker sections in India, have also rediscovered the inherent value of the classical tradition of comparative history for sociological analysis.<sup>17</sup>

I am not taking an historicist position. My argument is that history, although not sufficient, is certainly necessary to deepen our understanding of social realities in India today. My advocacy is in favour of 'using' history, and not 'doing' it. Sociologists, in my view, need to learn to read between the lines of historical writings. The better historians, too, are acutely interested in questions of causality, generalization, etc., but they also accept the demands of readability and, therefore, they build these questions into their narrative unobtrusively. Tracing the historical origins and process of development of social phenomena enriches our understanding in ways that the raw empiricism of facts-collection through standardized questionnaires or interview-schedules may miss altogether. I have found particularly the medieval and colonial periods of Indian history very relevant for studying the agrarian social structure, class relations and various facets of rural transformation as

14. Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *The Dynamics of a Rural Society* Berlin Akademie Verlag, 1957, also by him, *The Rise and Fall of the East India Company* Berlin Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1958. A. R. Desai, *op cit*, 1976.

15. Y. Singh, *Modernization of Indian Tradition, (A Systemic Study of Social Change)* Delhi Thomson, 1973.

16. S. Saberwal, 'Indian urbanism: a socio-historical perspective' *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, (N.S.) 11 (1977), pp. 1-19, also by him, 'Inequality in colonial India' *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (N.S.), 13 (No. 2), 1979, pp. 241-64.

17. Some of these studies have been reported in M. S. A. Rao (ed.), *Social Movements in India*, Vols. I-II Delhi Manohar, 1978-79, and also in A. R. Desai (ed.), *Peasant Struggles in India* Bombay Oxford University Press, 1979.

well as of peasant resistance in India<sup>18</sup>

Not only that, using history sensitizes sociologists to their own specific socio-cultural milieu, and they get better equipped to ask sociologically more meaningful and purposeful questions. Fortunately, we have excellent and well-maintained source-material in India, thanks to the colonial bureaucracy — particularly in the field of land revenue administration. If at least a small part of one's field-work time is spent in a first-hand perusal of such historical material on land settlements, land-alienation and land litigations, it would be immensely rewarding for sociologists interested in locating the roots of social inequalities in India, the institutionalization of different forms of oppression and exploitation, and above all in understanding why the oppressed rebel under certain social conditions.

Certainly, these academic interests could not possibly be 'value-free' in the sense the Weberian methodological dictum is generally understood. A more purposeful social science has to be 'value-based' which does not mean that it has to forsake its basic commitment to all canons of objectivity. Mere understanding of society and social phenomena is not enough, it is necessary to change them in 'desired directions'. Sociologists in India can richly contribute to social criticism, at least to the debate on 'what are those desired directions — in terms of both ends and means'. As members of society they owe this much debt. To repay it, Indian sociology must search for better allies in social science disciplines.

In other words, sociology must grow more as 'social criticism'<sup>19</sup> if it has to justify its existence particularly in a developing society like ours. To imagine that this task of social criticism goes well only with

highly literate societies where ideas are being extensively discussed, and that in India no one cares to read criticism is to indulge in cynicism. The call is for criticism anchored in social commitment, criticism that is socially relevant and is a response to our fast changing environment.

If these tasks are to be fulfilled, Indian sociology must reorient itself, it should be more concerned with social theory, be better rooted in history, must attempt constantly to balance between the 'micro' and 'macro' analytical perspectives, be honest enough to admit its value-premises and value-commitments, and must turn to the 'masses' rather than to elites. We have overdone 'caste' so far; let us explore the 'class' underpinnings of what are seemingly 'caste-relations, caste-conflicts and caste-atrocities'.<sup>20</sup> Let the classical sociological traditions — Comte, Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Pareto — not be forgotten. But it will not suffice to swear only by them. To build on those foundations without losing sight of the historical specificity of the Indian society is the crying need of our time.

Vast sections of the underprivileged in the Indian society, who have failed to make it through the 'mobility' route, are going to resort to the alternative 'mobilization' route to social transformation. What are the prospects of 'mobilization', where is it likely to lead, and would social scientists, including sociologists, like to be just silent, indifferent spectators of the transformation process or would they like to contribute to it in some measure? These are some of the questions the sociology profession as a whole must address itself to, sooner than later.

University Press, 1971. T. Bottomore, *Critics of Society* London George Allen and Unwin, 1969, pp. 9-19, also by him, *Sociology as Social Criticism* New York Pantheon Books, 1974, pp. 90-94.

20. Andre Beteille has significantly contributed to the studies of these conflicts. See his, 'Agrarian unrest in Tanjore', *The Times of India*, 20 September 1969, 'Peasant associations and the agrarian class structure', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (N.S.) 4 (1970) and also *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure*, New Delhi Oxford University Press, 1974. Also A. Ghosh, 'Caste Collisions', *Seminar*, June 1980.

18. See my book *Peasant Revolts in India, c-1920-1950* (in press).

19. I have used the expression 'Sociology as social criticism' in the sense Norman Birnbaum and Tom Bottomore have used it. See N. Birnbaum, *Towards a Critical Sociology*, New York, Oxford



# The sociological imagination

DIPANKAR GUPTA

IN this paper I am indebted to two major works. The first is *The Sociological Imagination* by C Wright Mills and the other is *The Social Construction of Reality* by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. I am, moreover, liable to the charge that I have drawn implications from the latter work which its authors did not intend. My only defence is that the stream of consciousness that both these works jointly have set me off on may differ in its trajectory from that of those who read these works separately and whose concerns are not nearly as obsessive as mine. Having thus acknowledged my debt to these two seminal works let me now try and make clear why I thought of them in the first place.

The ideas germane in this paper emanated from my recent probings in areas dealing with communalism, chauvinism and racism. In the course of pursuing these concerns, I found that there was very little in Indian sociological or social anthro-

pological literature which would enable me to understand the social bases of such sharp ascriptive formulations in order to punch holes in them. This failing, I thought, tells of the kind of nerveless sociology that is pursued in our country, for, the internal unity of such ascriptive and communal formulations undoubtedly rests on the notion of the fundamental inequality of man, a proposition which I have come to believe is fundamentally anti-sociological. A sociology then, which is not stirred when surrounded, as in India, by pronounced communal and ascriptive passions that constantly undermine the philosophical root of the discipline, is nerveless, if not worse.

I have always considered sociology at its best to be a humanizing discipline, a great 'leveller', a discipline that knocks the bottom out of all social manifestations of arrogance, obscurantism and prejudice and which asserts the fundamental equality of man. This I believe is



the principal task of sociology. More important, I would opine, than providing delightful vignettes of different cultural traditions, mores, customs, which many sociologists think is the bread and butter of their discipline.

**T**he problem, as I see it, is that the study of human diversity as an end in itself cannot function intrinsically as a 'leveller'. It does not see its eventual destination as that of demonstrating the equality of man, but as that of portraying, sometimes with a very fine nib, the minutiae of various social systems. Each such system is identified and insulated by the pervasive penetration of a typical cultural model which, it is believed, 'is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations'.<sup>1</sup> Studying human diversity in this fashion leaves the popular consciousness unfettered and unembarrassed to go on with a construction of reality, where the 'other' is, according to Berger and Luckmann, apprehended by means of 'typificatory schemes', or reified social categories, and 'the social reality of everyday life is thus apprehended in a continuum of typifications, which are progressively anonymous as they are removed from the "here and now" of the face to face situation'.<sup>2</sup>

It is this principle of typification that is being identified here as the source of human misunderstanding. It denies a universal view of humanity and orders it instead into categories that become more rigid and unyielding as the life situation of one section of mankind gets more distanced from the other. Once humanity is thus segregated in the popular construction of reality, the accession of inegalitarian ideological structures is legitimized on an ever

widening franchise. The 'sociological imagination' as C Wright Mills described it, enters here to counter these typificatory schemes, not, as the following quote will show, as a compendium of arms and ammunition, but as a theory of warfare.

C Wright Mills wrote 'The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions. We do not know the limits of man's capacities for supreme effort or willing degradation, for agony or glee, for pleasurable brutality or the sweetness of reason. But in our time we have come to know that the limits of 'human nature' are frighteningly broad. The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relation between the two within society. That is its task and its promise'.<sup>3</sup>

The role of the sociological imagination then is primarily combative, and it is in its application to the terrain of human diversity that the notion of the fundamental equality of man is won and asserted.

**I**t is from here on that on several occasions I shall depart from both Mills and Berger and Luckmann in developing my argument. In the context of this paper, my disagreement with Mills is that he believes that 'ordinary men' feel the need for sociological imagination and hunger for facts which would allow them to develop their imagination most vividly. 'What they need, and what they feel they need, is a quality of mind that will help them to use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and what may be happening within

themselves. It is this quality, I am going to contend, that journalists and scholars, artists and publicists, scientists and editors are coming to expect of what may be called sociological imagination'.<sup>4</sup>

In my opinion the lay person does not ordinarily feel the need for sociological imagination, for he has recourse to 'symbolic universes' which he has internalized, and which provide him with the rationale for the popular construction of reality. And neither, I might add, are there moments of any significant duration either in the biography of an individual or in the history of the collective, where either feels hampered or crippled by the awareness that the knowledge possessed is not a unified whole, that it lacks a theoretical system.

It is here then that I disagree with Berger and Luckmann who proceed in detailing the social construction of reality from its imputed pre-theoretical origin.<sup>5</sup> Whatever might be the value of such an approach, it is entirely hypothetical and does not conform to the liveliness and depth of the ongoing process of the construction of reality at the social and popular levels.

**T**he above, hopefully, illustrates why I have pitted sociological imagination against social (or popular) construction of reality. The individual does not feel the need for sociological imagination (except for a few misfits), and neither is the *homo socius* ever at a loss for a theoretical system. It is precisely because the social construction of reality excels at typifications to order its social universe, that fellow men are seen (in decreasing order of sophistication) either as unfortunately unequal, or as culturally unequal, or as biologically unequal, or as a composite of all these formulations.

The eventual arrival at such higher order typifications presumes a theoretical awareness, so that the typifications less general, are not a

1 This phrase has been lifted from Gwyn A. Williams' work, 'The Concept of Hegemony in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci,' quoted in E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, 1978, London, Merlin Press, p. 73. I may be exonerated for using it slightly out of context.

2 Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 1971, Harmondsworth, Penguin, pp. 45-48. See also Peter Worsley *The Third World*, 1967, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, p. 25.

3 C Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* 1970, Harmondsworth, Penguin, pp. 5-6. The term sociological imagination is in its essentials similar to Thomas Kuhn's 'scientific imagination'. See his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 1970, Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, p. 6.

4 Mills, *Ibid*, p. 5.

5 Berger and Luckmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-49.



jumble of contradictory observations but are, on the contrary, constructed out of an ordered arrangement of observations. This is possible because they are imbued even at the lowest level, by a theory, by a grand design. To think that the process of social construction of reality is even remotely analogous to the inductive system, would be to misunderstand and underestimate the fertility of the collective and subjective consciousness.

**T**he people are not waiting for or wanting sociological imagination. This makes even harder the task of a sociologist who sets out to propagate a state of mind and a theoretical system which understands and relates inequality and diversity not to types of human beings, or at a higher level of sophistication, to types of human culture, but to socio-historical factors that dwell upon and fashion different contingent conditions.

When the compartmentalization of mankind in typological brackets is the baseline for all *inegalitarian* ideological structures, it is not enough that sociologists conduct empirical research to relate institutions to legitimating symbolic universes. Though Berger and Luckmann believe that such work would 'greatly enhance the sociological understanding of contemporary reality',<sup>6</sup> they do not realize that the reality they hope to grasp is itself tendentious and that the combative and humanizing role of sociology will be greatly subverted if it shares in the paradigm that constructs this tendentious reality.

Popular constructions of reality from the highest level of symbolic universe to the lowest level of typification refract and do not reflect reality. Reality thus refracted falls on the screen, like so many colours through a prism, only now human beings are distinctly categorised and typed. This classification is not a transitive one, that is one that bears the possibility of transition from one class to another, but is fixed and positioned in a culturological (more commonly, racial) trance.

When sociologists take up these constructions of reality as their sole domain of concern, or even as starting points, they leave the door wide open for insidious accretions from outside, and secretions from within, which mesh their scholarship with inegalitarian and obscurantist ideological formulations. The sociology thus generated would mix easily with the bric-a-brac of various typifications in the popular mind. Sociology would then be a gracious pastime with impeccable table manners. Some of its outpourings would no doubt be excellent and would be eagerly sought. They would be read and digested. And in each course, their data base, like nutrients, would add muscle and flesh to the dominating, that is the popular, intellectual constructs.

**T**he point needs to be stretched further. Micro-level culture studies are not generally carried out in a sociological vacuum. Our busy social anthropologist would not like to be known as a layman's ideologue. There are sociological paradigms within which he works, and what he produces he believes satisfies the hunger of these paradigms and not the base desires of popular constructs. But these hungry paradigms, whether of Weber, Sombart, Hagen, Parsons, Dumont or of Oscar Lewis, do not in their articulation hit at the moral regime of the popular constructs either. Their scheme is operationalised by typifications, e.g., traditional and rational; homo hierarchicus and homo aequilus, collective oriented and self oriented, etc.

These typifications need not always hunt in pairs, and various permutations and combinations are formulated for which corresponding societal types are also discovered. And if one cares to burrow deep into the logical moorings of these typifications, one would find that what breathes life into them and sparkles their vivacity is the axiomatic acceptance that men, after all, are fundamentally unequal.

It is only when the acquiescence is explicit and the emergent pattern bold, gaudy and personally offensive, that the dormant sociological

imagination, in some of us, lumbers up unsteadily and mistily directs invectives against the Oscar Lewis<sup>7</sup> of the sociological world. And when our invectives touch only a marginal ear and ring hollow even to us, we are confused for we have failed to make the necessary connection between Oscar Lewis' stridency and acclaim and the fact that we, in our own little worlds, in our unobtrusive little ways, have provided the academic seedbed for the legitimization of the 'culture of poverty'.

Our neat monographs, detailing the rich human mosaic and blinding human diversity, were accomplished with such inventive precision that we reified, hypostatized, anthropomorphized every empyrean item with a sociological 'function' and filed into every spiritual recess a 'structural' necessity. With all this ground work done, it needed just a gadfly to build a theory of the 'culture of poverty' and bring out explicitly the implications of assumptions we have been making all along. That is why we were confused.

**O**scar Lewis' theory of the culture of poverty is not the work of one man. It is the work of an entire culture compressing its collective

<sup>7</sup> Oscar Lewis, *La Vida A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty — San Juan and New York*, 1966, New York, Random House. See also Charles A. Valentine, *Culture and Poverty*, 1968, Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, especially, Chs I-III. Oscar Lewis, a renowned American anthropologist, is credited with being the first academic to expound systematically the notion of 'the culture of poverty'. The 'culture of poverty', very briefly, places the primary causative factor for economic backwardness in underdeveloped countries, and communities, on the culture of their inhabitants. The notion of the 'culture of poverty' was immensely popular in haute academic circles of the United States, as witnessed for instance, by the accolades showered on the Moynihan Report (see Valentine cited above). But it was not very popular in developing countries, where even the staunchest establishment sociologist or anthropologist found it difficult to accept. The rejection initially, was not so much on the methodology or on the theoretical premises of the study, as on its conclusion, which clearly implied that the underdeveloped world does not have to look far to understand the reasons for their poverty, for the reasons lie right there within them, in their cultural make up.



hubris within the covers of a book<sup>8</sup> But sociological paradigms need not succumb to popular constructions of reality in such an obvious manner always There are two major routes by which this might happen First, and the most easily identifiable route, is when they adopt these constructions almost wholesale into their works, *a la* Lewis The other less easily identifiable and more prevalent way is when, by scholarly acumen, societies or segments of societies are typed by sociologists into categories which, though unheard of in the non-academic world, still follow the principles of popular typifications

These typifications again pronounce 'hermetically sealed' cultures and indicate the range of culturally permissible (or tainted) responses to a variety of stimuli These typifications, too, notwithstanding their nomenclatural acuity and the tautness of their conceptualization, rest, as do popular typifications, on a cultural determinant, and cannot be used combatively against the latter

On the other hand, because their specific gravities are the same they intermingle easily and strengthen the current of inegalitarian ideologies flowing down their declivities to fill up their chauvinist and racist estuaries If such an accusation seems unwarranted to some, sample the following quote from the greatest type builder of all, Max Weber 'Only Master Races have a vocation to climb the ladder of world development If peoples who do not possess this profound quality try to do it, not only the sure instinct of other nations will oppose them, but they will also come internally to grief'<sup>9</sup>

What the sociological imagination is up against is, in short, ahistoric typifications of humanity And the opposition is fairly stiff as socio-

logists in general have not shown the mettle to resist capitulating before the moral regime of the popular construction of reality and to shake off that 'culturological trance' The temptation to use stereotypes, or invent new types, is very compelling for they suitably blank out problem areas, unlike scientific categories which throw them up and push them into focus<sup>10</sup>

Partly also it is a question of the cultural conditioning of the sociologist and his susceptibility to be enthralled in the 'culturological trance' Rather than shake it off consciously and invoke the sociological imagination, for which he feels no need in this state of trance, it seems much more straightforward and legitimate for him to get his bearings and reference points from popular constructions of reality, either of the members of the society, or of those outside regarding that society This is the aperture that Dumont and Pocock advocate for sociologists,<sup>11</sup> though it is quite likely that they do not see the implications of their prescription quite in the same way as I do

According to these authors, if the people have a 'theory' such as the caste system, then it follows that the political and economic factors are secondary because the caste system says so<sup>12</sup> It is such a position that we specifically wish to impugn It is one thing to know popular theories and it is quite another to see reality ordered by them In which case then the sociological imagination becomes redundant, and along with it the incessant demand to unravel the socio-historical bases of this peculiar theory

On the other hand, it is the spread of a peculiar symbolic universe (or theory) that determines the 'sociological' universe of one's academic pursuit Each sociology then has its respective beat, clearly

demarcated by the discontinuities in symbolic universes, and we are left with a plethora of sociologies with no 'overlapping interests' and consequently where no 'overlapping questions'<sup>13</sup> need be asked Diversity, yes, there is abundant scope for that as Dumont and Pocock exclaim,<sup>14</sup> but are we not in typing away mankind, the Hindus in this case, submitting to the protocol of the popular construction of reality? How are we adding to that quality of mind that is so essential in demonstrating the fundamental equality of man?

It is not our intention here to legislate away the vast variety of societal arrangements in order to arrive at an abstract 'human nature' Not at all Our starting point as we said earlier, is that human beings are fundamentally equal and this has nothing to do with the ahistorical concept, 'human nature' The task ahead is to explain the historical forces that have shaped human diversity

This point is not new but was made earlier by C Wright Mills when he said 'The idea of some "human nature" common to man as man is a violation of the social and historical specificity that careful work in the human studies requires Surely we ought occasionally to remember that in truth we do not know much about man, and that all the knowledge we do have does not entirely remove the *mystery* that surrounds his variety as it is revealed in history and biography Sometimes we do want to wallow in that *mystery*. (but) we will inevitably also study human variety, which for us means removing the *mystery* from our view of it'<sup>15</sup> (emphasis added)

The sociological imagination then hopes to study the totality and comprehend the relation of parts to the total in the larger dynamic historical conspectus The 'mystery' that surrounds other cultures is specifically the conundrum we wish

<sup>8</sup> See for a general treatment of this point, Valentine, *Ibid*, Ch 111 and Stanislaw Andreski, *Social Science as Sorcery*, 1972, London, Andre Deutsch, p 69

<sup>9</sup> See Otto Stammer, ed, *Max Weber and Sociology Today*, 1971 Oxford, p 85 I am grateful to Dr Robert Varickayil of South Gujarat University for bringing it to my notice

<sup>10</sup> Thompson, op cit , p 52

<sup>11</sup> Louis Dumont and D. Pocock, 'For a Sociology of India', in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, No 4 1960, Paris, Mouton, p 84

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>13</sup> Satish Saberwal, 'For Renewal,' in this issue

<sup>14</sup> Dumont and Pocock, op cit , p 85

<sup>15</sup> Mills, op cit , p 182



to solve. For this purpose a historical and relational optic is ineluctable. Such an optic faces no difficulty in integrating studies in various dimensions of human reality and offers the very real possibility of asking 'overlapping questions' without resorting to perfunctory overlapping fabrications. Now, for instance, not only do dominant forms of social groupings become amenable to socio-historical investigation, but also the genesis of cultural patterns and their communal articulation become 'overlapping' concerns of the discipline.

The 'mystery' that was alluded to earlier, the mystery that patrols the region between different typifications, is pursued and hunted on a historical terrain, which is *terra incognita* so far as the popular constructs of reality go. Whereas the orthodox anthropological route at its best reconstructs, sometimes more vividly, popular constructs, the sociological imagination demystifies them by locating them in their historical and relational environs.

The first tangible result of this demystification is the sociological awareness that human culture, broadly understood, is a 'highly mutable affair',<sup>16</sup> or as Berger and Luckmann have said 'Institutions tend to persist unless they become problematic'.<sup>17</sup> The sanctity of popular constructions of reality loses its aura, for the human mosaic is no longer predetermined, that is immediately knowable (and cannot, like items in a dictionary, be listed). Human diversity is on the other hand being constantly enriched by human beings who refuse to submit to their imputed one dimensional causality, who reach out for fresh social options with a rational calculus.

As Peter Worsley said in *The Third World* 'For men are not determined entities, like rocks and trees. They have minds. Human beings can and do react against the past. They are affected by the past, in so far as they absorb behaviour

patterns of their culture. But they also have faculties of imagination and creativity, they innovate as well as receive and absorb, they revolt as well as continue. They step outside the structural framework of the existing order and the intellectual framework of received ideas to create new ideas and new ways of ordering their relationships with one another. In order to understand human behaviour, then, we have to be sensitive not only to the past and the present, but also to the future'.<sup>18</sup>

If the plasticity and malleability of cultures are not recognised, then great harm is done in all vital areas of human concern which cannot afford anything but intellectual integrity and responsibility. In the field of social medicine, for instance, the popular typifications of mankind and all the prejudices that go along with them obstruct any meaningful debate on health policy and medical care. In order to launch a meaningful discussion, on genuine humanist assumptions, one has to wade through tomes of cultural studies whose approach to the problem, as one author put it, is 'to blame the victim'.<sup>19</sup>

In this approach as both the practitioners of health 'and the human targets of its services are, in their interactions and transactions, fulfilling socially defined roles in culturally defined ways',<sup>20</sup> the morbidity of the poor in depressed countries is adduced to their cultural apparatus. Their irrational suspicion of modern medicine, their unrelenting habit of submitting to faith healers and medicine men, and other such agnate postulates, all of which and more flow freely from the inexhaustible structure of type casts, and all of which are empirically untrue.

18. Peter Worsley, *The Third World*, 1967, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, p. 272.

19. Omafume F. Onoge, 'Capitalism and public health. A neglected theme in the medical anthropology of Africa', in Stanley R. Ingman and Anthony E. Thomas, eds., *Topias and Utopias in Health: Policy Studies*, 1975, The Hague, Mouton Publishers, p. 221.

20. Lyle Sanders cited in *Ibid*, p. 220.

Banerji, Bose<sup>21</sup> and some others have recorded the alacrity with which those deemed to have been trapped in the 'culture of poverty' have sought modern medicine against their indigenous brews, only to be let down by its purveyors who have no appreciation of the particularities of their problem. But medical sociologists and planners are unmindful of this aspect, and from the depths of their bottomless arrogance they advocate policies which get successively further and further away from the people, confirming again and again in a thickening circle, that their typifications were indeed valid.

Communalism then, as we understand it, is invested in the very origins of popular typifications. Part of the problem in understanding communalism is that it is recognised only when such popular constructions of reality climax in a collective orgiastic finale. For, the paradigm that generates communalism is the same paradigm that generates, at seemingly innocuous levels, scholarly and popular typifications. It is because the ripest derivative of this paradigm is seen in isolation from its quotidian manifestations that 'communalism' appears on the intellectual horizons as a 'problematic' with special properties whose resolution can be achieved by a negative articulation of these properties, that is, by sheer 'will power', by an exogenous determination not integral to the discipline.

It is not then only outright cases of communalism that the sociological imagination resolves. It works consistently to bridge the interstices and uproot the barricades that impede the understanding of one section of mankind regarding another placed in a different socio-historical milieu. To give an example the prosperity of the North

21. D. Banerji, 'The place of indigenous and western system of medicine in the health services of India', in *International Journal of Health Services*, 1979, Vol. 9, pp. 511-519. Sukla Bose, *Health Situation and Problems of Health Development A Study of a Village in Bengal*, 1979 (Mimeo) Centre for Social Studies, Surat. Harold A. Gould, 'The implication of technological change for folk and sociological medicine' *American Anthropologist*, 1957, Vol. 59, pp. 507-516.

16. Barzun and Graff quoted in Mills, op cit, p. 182.

17. Berger and Luckmann, op cit, p. 135.



West, say Punjab, and the poverty of the East, say Bengal, are often explained by, among other things, the hardness and the entrepreneurship of the Punjabi peasants. Not discounting the fact that the weather may have something to do with the relentless robustness of the Punjabi peasant, this characteristic has to be explained and analysed in a historical perspective. Conversely, the insouciance and indolence supposedly characterising the Bengali peasants also demand an explanation.

To understand the cultural differences between the Punjabi and Bengali peasants is itself a sociological problem and cannot be simply taken as an irreducible datum. If now we were to investigate the problem we would have to note that Bengal in pre British India was a surplus producing State. Already our earlier notion of a Bengali peasant is tottering. If we were now to add the facts that the building of railways and the permanent settlement destroyed the traditional irrigational system in Bengal, and that for strategic purposes it was necessary to settle demobilized soldiers in Punjab and colonize large tracts of land for this purpose, by developing irrigation in those regions,<sup>22</sup> we begin to get a glimpse of the mechanism determining the unevenness between Punjab and Bengal of today.

These factors alone do not constitute a total explanation. But what is being stressed here is would these and other issues have come out at all to occupy the centre of sociological analysis unless the sociologist held a firm and conscious commitment to demonstrate the fundamental equality of man?

**T**he same logic is retained if one were to study full blown communalism as well. The sociologist following the traditional anthropological/

sociological route, immersing himself exclusively into the congeries of beliefs, value patterns and mobilization apparatuses, that is, into all the special properties of a particular variant of communalism, further perpetuates the mystery that shrouds the perception of one community by another. It tells us very little as to why from the multitude of typifications inhabiting the symbolic universe does only one antithetical set congeal at a historic moment to attain joint sovereignty over the collective conscious.

**W**hy, for instance, did so many Maharashtrians in Bombay, swayed by the Shiv Sena, pick on the South Indians? The question becomes all the more important as less than a decade ago the Maharashtrians viewed the Gujaratis as their main enemy. Why is it, for instance, that the caste Hindus in Marathwada attacked the Mahars of that region? Why in this case was the Hindu-Muslim contradiction not as dominant as the caste Hindu-scheduled caste contradictions? Why again were Mahars largely persecuted in three out of five districts in Marathwada? Why were those in the other two districts left relatively untouched? Finally, why was the brunt of caste Hindu wrath centred on the Mahars alone? Why not on the members of other scheduled caste and untouchable communities like the Mangs and Chamars who also live there?

These are the questions that cannot be answered within the arc of the traditional sociological/anthropological route, which, as it begins with the 'phenomenon' — the main event — does not activate those zones of silence that communalism ordains. Indeed, the sociologist set on such a route does not even know of their existence. Without even reading the prohibitory signboards and the 'keep off' notices, he stays away from the green room and the rafters, impatient to view the main event. Consequently, cultural symbols attain an explanatory power in his review, where beef eaters are destined to go for cow worshippers and vice versa. The protean character of communal symbolism escapes him and each communal spectacle

is for him a marvel of cultural intransigence.

**I**t remains then for the sociological imagination to pierce this veil of mystery, to examine the selective nature of historical, economic and social factors which render a particular form of communalism with its specificity and to be able to differentiate its scope and potentiality from other proximate and potential varieties of the same phenomenon. By insisting on the examination of historical deposits on structural faults, the sociological imagination shifts the primary focus from categories thrown up and defined by ripened communalism to the sociological breeding ground where such categories are first formulated and then gain dominance. To understand communalism in this sense is also to destroy it with a finality that cannot be approximated by well meaning scholarship which works within the boundaries of the traditional sociological/anthropological route.

If any overwhelming point needs to be reiterated, after all that has been said, admittedly in a discursive manner, it is that sociologists cannot imitate the mode of discourse prevalent in popular constructions of reality, if sociology is to act as a 'leveller' and as a humanizing discipline. Aimless studies of culture not only sediment around typifications which divide humanity in the popular consciousness, but often even substantiate them. To be able to ask 'overlapping questions' the sociologist will have to look at himself critically at every step, not through the lens that society at large (or the 'generalised others', in symbolic interactionist jargon) wants him, almost compels him, to wear, but by the standards set by the sociological imagination. The 'culturological trance' is then broken. Diversity is no longer a cut off point of sociological investigation whose origins reside in a never never world. It now demands an explanation in a historical and relational perspective, a perspective that bathes all mankind in the same light and then discovers their potentiality as creators of social diversity.

22 For more on this theme see Boudhayan Chattopadhyay's signal contribution entitled, 'Outline points for the study of contrasting patterns of development between the north western wheat region and the eastern rice region' Working Paper No 1, Centre for Regional Ecological Science Studies in Development Alternatives, Calcutta. It is to be published shortly by Orient Longmans.



# The working class

ANJAN GHOSH

PERHAPS the association of 'labour' with primal sin, toil and manual work is antithetical to the middle class sense of propriety, for little else explains the sociologists' diffidence towards industrial labour in India. Both inhabit a common world of work but for one it is labour, for the other creative self-gratification. Even when sociologists have deigned to look upon industrial workers as the subject of their study, they have been ideologically rooted in the bourgeois tradition. That is the point of this critique.

As well demarcated arenas of study, the village and the community have dominated sociology in India. Compared to its neat boundaries the sociologist has found it difficult to cover the loosely spread industrial labour in his study. His conceptual baggage has been the main impediment. It has not been able to tackle the complexity of the capital-labour relationship at multiple levels.

The concern with community situations is a result of sociology's overwhelming preoccupation with cultural norms and values, harking back nostalgically to a lost moral order with its implicit acknowledgment of the uniqueness of Indian society. This enables orientalism as

an ideology to persist, and India to be considered as the counterpoint to western industrialism and egalitarianism. While this may serve as the springboard of 'theoretical comparison',<sup>1</sup> it also signifies exclusion from the process of history.

With its inordinate emphasis on empirical observation and fieldwork as the sole source of behavioural data, the unit of sociological studies was severely circumscribed, in turn giving rise to its cultural bias. Structural-functionalism with its assumptions of value consensus and functional interdependence served as the theoretical mainstay of the sociological traditions in India. So, village studies proliferated and the micro-processes of continuity and change were accumulated with the expectation that it would shed light upon the major transformations occurring in Indian society. The macro-dimension of colonialism, industrial development or secular inequality went largely by default. Empirical 'authenticity' gained precedence over identifying

<sup>1</sup> L. Dumont *Homo Hierarchicus*, Paladin, London, 1970. For a recent critique see Andre Beteille 'Homo Hierarchicus, Homo Equals,' *Modern Asian Studies* 13 4, 1979.



the motive forces of change. Exposure to other theoretical trends like structuralism and Marxism along with recognition of historical material and cultural texts as sources of sociological data has allowed a shift towards processual analysis.<sup>2</sup> The horizon of Indian sociology is expanding

Three different approaches have been adopted by sociologists for the study of labour in India. A number of scholars adhering to the labour commitment theory have felt that traditional norms, practices and institutions like the village, caste system and joint family are impediments to the adoption of an 'industrial way of life' by the workers.<sup>3</sup> According to them the reason for the low commitment of the Indian industrial worker can be attributed to the restraining 'pull' of primordial ties. Though distinguishing between traditional and modern institutions, the adapters believe that 'while these institutions had a degree of rigidity about them, they also had a propensity to make adjustments with changing environment'.<sup>4</sup>

This interdependence of modernity with tradition was explained by Sheth in the conclusion of his study of a factory in Gujarat. He wrote: 'The factory and the community made adjustments with each other and coexisted. This coexistence is partly ascribed to the fact that traditionally the community possessed some of the cultural characteristics — such as the absence of wide-range kinship obligations, a sense of time and discipline, flexibility in changing situations, etc., — which the new technology demanded.' In conclusion he stated, 'that industrialization in this country has been a rather gradual change generated in many respects from within the society and not the sudden

and largely involuntary change that was imposed on other "colonial" societies'.<sup>5</sup>

The third approach is the *historical-materialist* one and diverges radically from the above two. Its main assumption is that the workers and management are engaged in a struggle for power to control the process of production. Consequently, not consensus but conflict is the basic premise of this perspective. Conflict is not instrumental but structural and defines the relationship of the two classes not only within but also outside the workplace.<sup>6</sup> In accordance with the prevailing trend of theoretical dominance in Indian sociology, most studies of labour have adopted the first two approaches. This essay, however, attempts a critique of the two from the vantage point of the latent third tendency.

Labour commitment has been a major preoccupation of sociologists studying industrial workers in India. Its theoretical roots are intertwined with the 'logic of industrialization' or modernization.<sup>7</sup> Extrapolating the historical experience of industrialization in Western Europe on a universal scale, Kerr and associates postulated an invariant mode of industrial organization even for late industrializers like India. For them, an industrial way of life was based on a consensus over its goal: increased accumulation of capital. The conformity is articulated thus: 'Consensus develops wherever industrialization is successful. The labour force becomes committed to and settled into industrial life. It accepts the pace of work, the web of rules, the surrounding structure. The sense of protest subsides. Society provides more of the amenities of life. Men learn from experience how to do things better, and the rough edges

are evened off. Industrialization has been accepted'.<sup>8</sup> It is machine technology which is the great leveller of the 'industrializing elites' and the workers into a homogenous intermediate stratum. Here, industrialization imposes a certain uniformity over people, whatever may have been the path of initial inducement.

This, of course, is only part of the story. The commitment theory has been criticized for its empirical and methodological inadequacy<sup>9</sup> but its ideological ramifications need to be exposed. That technology is not the sole arbiter of social relationships and that ideology can be an essential element even in industrial organizations has been shown for instance in China.<sup>10</sup> More recently, Henderson and Cohen have shown how even the imposition of a work ethic was resisted by workers in Africa.

In other words the initiation and reproduction of the capitalist relations of production is not a spontaneous process, it is coercive. By not easily succumbing to the dictates of capital and enabling their labour to be transformed into labour power, workers in the less developed countries clearly demarcate their interests from those of the capitalist. The resistance took myriad forms, thus 'workers often stubbornly resisted the cultural shifts necessary for them to become effective proletarians, often preferring to adhere to folk customs at odds with the rigorous schedules of factory production'.<sup>11</sup> A different view of traditional institutions and customs is suggested from that of the commitment theorists. Adopting conflict as the determining factor between worker and management, a number of incongruities in social relationships can be explained, notwithstanding

2 The first results are to be found in the works of Veena Das, R D Sanwal, S Saberwal, Dipankar Gupta, Gail Omvedt and D N Dhanagare.

3 A Feldman and W Moore (eds) *Labour Commitment and Social Change in Developing Areas*, New York, 1960.

4 N R Sheth 'The industrial man of India,' *Economic and Political Weekly* (hereafter EPW), 24 November, 1979 (Review of Management) p. M. — 106.

5 N R Sheth: *The Social Framework of an Indian Factory*, Manchester University Press, 1968, Ch 9.

6 A R Desai: *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Bombay, 1976, Ch 11, Gail Omvedt: *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society*, Bombay, 1976, Ch 13, Manorama Savur 'Labour and productivity in the tea industry' EPW 17th March, 1973.

7 C. Kerr et al *Industrialism and Industrial Man*, Pelican, 1973.

8 Ibid p 266.

9 S Munshi 'Industrial labour in developing economies: a critique of labour commitment theory', EPW, 27, August (Review of Management) 1977.

10 C Bettelheim *Cultural Revolution and Industrial Organization in China* Monthly Review Press, New York, 1974.

11 Jeff Henderson and Robin Cohen 'Capital and the work ethic,' *Monthly Review*, November, 1979.



standing the different forms that this may take in different societies

The values indicative of commitment are unilateral for the workers. Only they have to conform. The nature of the management's commitment is seldom examined. Adherence to alternate norms by workers, but not by capitalists, is considered pathological by commitment theorists. So, while the search for 'industrial man' remains unabated, the pre-conditions of an industrial society remain unfulfilled. Colonialism while implanting industries to facilitate processing of raw materials for export and thus increasing the drain of surplus, subordinated Indian industrialization to its own need of capital accumulation. Instead of a 'logic of industrialization', a 'logic of dependence' followed. India's integration into the world capitalist system as a colony effectively thwarted the possibility of autonomous industrial capitalism taking root here. So the factory did not signify the same set of social relationships here as it did for Europe, where independent industrialization transformed the traditional institutions from within. The distortion of the developmental process left its imprint at the level of the organisation and relations of production.

What was the historical specificity of industrial growth in India? Firstly, as a colony it served as a protected market for British manufactures, precluding any competition from Indian enterprise. The resultant conflict between the indigenous and foreign capitalists was manifested in the former's clamour for 'protection' or 'swadeshi'. Indian entrepreneurs were placed in a subordinate role to foreign capital and were not allowed access to raw materials required by the metropolitan bourgeoisie. Finally, the production of capital goods was restricted as part of imperial policy.<sup>12</sup>

Even 'protection' in the form of tariffs could not extricate the Indian capitalists from the web of foreign collaboration and dependence. Even initially independent Indian manufacturers like Kirlskar or Mahindra

and Mahindra entered into foreign collaboration when they shifted from commerce and small scale production to mass manufacture of industrial goods.<sup>13</sup> Technological dependence resulted in a new form of international division of labour and surplus appropriation by transnational corporations. The 'parasitism' of the Indian capitalists noted by Joshi has to be located in this context of structural blockage. This parasitism is a consequence, not cause, of subordination to international capital.<sup>14</sup>

Dependent capitalism affected the structuring of the labour force in manifold ways. In order to extract more and more surplus value in a labour surplus situation, pre-capitalist relationships of bondage were retained. The 'labour-lords'<sup>15</sup> and *sirdars* who recruited labour for industries employed primordial ties of caste, kin and community to control and 'discipline' the workers. Often the latter were held by debt bondage under a particular *sirdar*.<sup>16</sup> Alongside, after the World War-II there was institutionalized recruitment of unskilled labour for the mines as bonded labour by the Coalfields Recruiting Organization (CRO). CRO labour was centrally recruited at Gorakhpur and was sent to different mines on 11 months contract. At the mines they were kept segregated from the rest of the workforce, in barracks known as CRO camps, and strict surveillance was kept over them.<sup>17</sup> For the skilled workers the labour market was a little more formalised, reducing the importance of contractors and recruiters. Skills provided bargaining power to the workers and they

generally came from urban, higher caste backgrounds.

Before independence, a major thrust of colonial industrialization was to reduce labour costs by depressing wages below subsistence level. This was done by employing casual labour primarily, or on piece-rate basis. The practice is not unknown even today. Thus, instead of allowing social reproduction of labour power, which would include the worker and his family, wages were so structured as to enable only individual reproduction of labour power. It was this which compelled the workers to leave their families behind and maintain their rural ties. In this way predatory capitalism exploited not only the workers but also appropriated surplus from the community which maintained the worker's family in his absence.

In the non-urban industrial situation employers sought to create a 'transposed community'. In the collieries of eastern India small parcels of land were given on rent-free tenures to the miners till about the second decade of the present century. In exchange they had to provide labour in the mines for a fixed number of days. This was more prevalent in Ranigunj and Giridih coalfields where the coal companies held large zamindari estates. In this way the relationships of landlord and tenant were preserved, as were the caste distinctions in the occupational hierarchy of the colliery, during the early phase of the industry.<sup>18</sup> Again in the tea plantations garden plots were allotted in order to retain migrant workers.<sup>19</sup>

Where the employers themselves fostered the antecedent community ties by abdicating their responsibility of creating the preconditions for industrialism, the question of labour commitment becomes irrelevant as a factor of economic growth.

13 R K Hazari *The Structure of the Corporate Private Sector*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1967, p. 259. Subhendu Dasgupta called my attention to this point.

14 P C Joshi 'Cultural dimension of economic development,' in S. Saberwal (ed) *Towards a Cultural Policy*, 1975, Vikas.

15 The term is taken from Lalita Chakravarty 'Emergence of an industrial labour force in a dual economy' *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 15:3, 1978.

16 Ranajit Dasgupta 'Labour Market in Colonial India' (mimeographed), 1980.

17 Government of India *Report of the National Commission on Labour*, New Delhi, 1969, Ch. 2.

18 C P Simmons 'Recruiting and Organizing an Industrial Labour Force in Colonial India. The case of the coal mining industry,' *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 13:4, 1976.

19 V Xaxa 'Agrarian Social Structure and Class Relations in Two Villages of Jalpaiguri District — A Comparative Study of the Plantation and Subsistence Settings', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, IIT Kanpur, 1978, Ch. V.

12 A K Bagchi *Private Investments in India, 1900-1939*, Cambridge, 1972.



But its ideological function remains potent since it obfuscates the real issues of power and exploitation

The question of power and dominance becomes explicit when we see that higher productivity means lower real wages for the workers (Table 1)

TABLE 1

Year	Index of Productivity	Consumer Price Index	Index of Real Wages
1961	100	100	100
1965	142.41	131.73	100.06
1967	162.79	165.38	96.73
1969	189.57	168.27	99.09
1973	278.53	226.92	104.98

Source Radha Iyer 'Industrial Strife, Workers' Paradise Lost', New Delhi, 10 December 1979

This erosion of the standard of living of industrial workers is often forgotten in the rhetoric of organised labour as a privileged class

To return to the subject matter of sociologists, who more often than not ignore the realities of dominance and exploitation to concentrate on norms of behaviour. Precisely because of the features outlined above, the factory can hardly be considered as a social system. As a unit of production it is part of a larger process — industrialization which structures the opposition between classes. The articulation of conflict between classes is historically specific, governed by the wide-ranging linkages of the factory with the wider milieu of an industrializing society

At this point it may be appropriate to remind the reader of the relative intransigence of sociologists towards industrial labour. As a result much of the literature on workers remains fragmented, is unable to reconstruct the framework within which industrial enterprise functions in India. The lack of antecedents for holistic analysis whose sense of problem and mode of enquiry stems from a theoretical concern has served as a major constraint. Thus, except for occasional snapshots, sociologists have rarely

dealt with the question of industrialization as a process

Among other aspects, alienation of the worker has been a significant variable of study by sociologists. However, alienation is interpreted in different ways in different traditions. In the context of capitalist production as a whole, alienation signifies the worker's loss of control over his labour power and the product of his labour. For the American school of pragmatist sociologists, since these structural relations cannot be empirically demonstrated, it is kept out of purview. Instead, effort is concentrated on identifying and enumerating discrete observations. The latter kind of an exercise is to be found in Sharma's book on *Indian Industrial Worker* (Vikas, New Delhi, 1974) which reduces alienation to observable responses like social isolation, normlessness and powerlessness. What this misses out in the process is the encapsulation of such observational data in one structural relationship of labour power as commodity.

Trade unions and politics have been another focal point of interest for sociologists. Various strategies of demarcation of the field of study have been adopted. While Ramaswamy chose one (the major?) union in a particular area as his unit, Mamkootam preferred the largest union in a steel plant (TISCO) while Sengupta took all the unions in another steel plant (DSP) as his subject.<sup>20</sup> But these strategies have an important effect on the spread of their study. The more discrete the unit, the lesser the generality of the situation. Trade unions function within a wider context of distribution of power and resources at the State and national level. Depending upon a union's capacity to mobilize forces at different levels and through multiple institutionalized channels, a union can act as an effective bargaining agent for the workers.

20 E A Ramaswamy *The Worker and His Union*, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1977, K Mamkootam 'Industrial relations in a steel plant,' in E A Ramaswamy (ed) *Industrial Relations in India*, Macmillan, New Delhi, 1978, Anil Sengupta 'Trade unions, politics and the State: a case from West Bengal', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (NS) 11 1 1977

The politics of trade unions is not confined to the work place but also embraces non-work situations. It is this that is resented by 'objective' observers who feel that unions should only be concerned with the workers' work situation.<sup>21</sup> What they choose to ignore is the integration of unions as an organization with structures of a higher order encompassing wider life spaces of the worker like the price level in a market economy. How unions are affected by government policy or changes in government or the structuring of life chances in a particular society is rarely taken into account.

Even about the politics of trade unionism, a host of prejudices prevail. While trade union militancy is invariably branded 'political', the non-recognition of majority-supported unions or the foisting of pliant company unions upon workers is not.<sup>22</sup> Hostility against trade unions still prevails as the management considers the formation of independent unions to be an affront to its authority. The prerogative of the management to manage arbitrarily is not beyond the ken of even public sector undertakings.<sup>23</sup> Any challenge to the unilateral authority of the management is construed as an imminent threat which must be eliminated.

Increasingly the differentiation within the labour force in India is being recognized. Without suggesting as some have done that the organized working class is a privileged class,<sup>24</sup> it is necessary to notice the varying circumstances and leverage of workers in industry. Holmstrom has proposed the concept of 'citadel' to distinguish people in permanent jobs in the large organized units from those

21 Bruce Millen *Political Role of Trade Unions in Developing Countries*, Hewari, 1963, P Raman. *Political Involvement of Unions in India*, Asia Publishing, Bombay, 1968

22 Radha Iyer on the struggle of Premier auto workers, *Business Standard*, 16 April, 1980

23 Radha Iyer 'What went wrong in Indian Airlines', *Business Standard*, 10 September, 1979

24 V M Dandekar 'Nature of class conflict in Indian society', *Artha Vigyan*, 1978



who are casual or temporary<sup>25</sup> The former are supposed to be less vulnerable than the latter Yet, this kind of a false dichotomy gets swiftly exposed when we find that it is the organized sector which is keen to promote the small units, primarily to cut down labour costs by farming out job work to these latter, and also to keep up production if and when there is a strike at the parent unit by putting out more of the work among the small units<sup>26</sup> In other words by using one against the other the basic unity of the work force is sought to be fractured

**C**olonial industrialization follows its own logic Unable to revolutionize the relations and means of production, it takes recourse to predatory expropriation of surplus by subordinating existing pre-capitalist forms of exploitation to its own purpose This gives rise to the cleavages within the work force Colonial industry required a largely unskilled labour force for its textiles and processing industries This was the first working class in India After independence, import substituting industrial growth and the manufacture of consumer goods has given birth to a 'new working class' which is coming of age now

Unlike his predecessor the 'new worker' is not a first generation migrant but more likely a second and third generation worker He has an urban background, is young and educated to school level, has acquired some formal skills or training, and works in a large factory with modern machinery He imbibes the rationality of modern mass production and is consequently at ease in the cosmopolitan urban-industrial milieu He respects collectivism and democracy and his relation with his trade union leader is more specific It is not governed by awe or patronage

Since 1977 it is this section of the workers which has been providing leadership to working class struggles This has led to more prolonged and violence-prone strikes and

gheraos<sup>27</sup> The workers are increasingly becoming conscious of their rights and are not willing to let them go by default The unilateral exercise of authority by management is challenged more often today This may not indicate a conscious politicization of the workforce but probably a spontaneous reaction against a structure which is increasingly exposed as it seeks to control the workers

**A** change of composition in the industrial work force because of the nature of industrialization after independence has led to different expectations on the part of the 'new worker' Conflict which had remained latent within the 'ma-baap' relationship with the employer is now seeking channels of expression Since it calls into question the sources of power, it is a political struggle This, however, may not be recognized as such by either contending party That does not diminish its political content but only manifests the tortuousness of the process of class formation in the Less Developed Countries The indications are there in the hue and cry over the prevalence of industrial violence

It is in this context that we need to know more about the particular features of the Indian working class To what extent has it become conscious of its class interests? Who leads the workers and how? What is the basis of legitimacy of a union leader? How does the management coopt leaders? What is the relation between leader and cadre in a trade union? How are workers mobilized and what issues agitate them most?

The above questions are based on the assumption that while workers need to work, they are at the same time in opposition to the management Conflict exists notwithstanding function A tradition recognizing this dialectical relationship is still to emerge in sociology That would require shedding a part of our conceptual inheritance Are we prepared to do so?

<sup>25</sup> M Holmstrom *South Indian Factory Workers*, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1978

<sup>26</sup> Radha Iyer 'Maharashtra's small unit belt', *Business Standard*, 29 October, 1979.

<sup>27</sup> Radha Iyer 'Industrial strife, workers' paradise lost,' *New Delhi*, 10 December 1979, 'Poona's unique working class', *Business Standard*, 8 October, 1979, The new working class, *Business India*, 19 March 1979, S Pendse Industrial Violence, *EPW*, 15 March 1980



# Disciplined eclecticism

PARTHA N MUKHERJI

IT is a commonplace now, particularly in the social sciences, and more so in the less mature ones like sociology, to mount vitriolic critiques on the works of established pundits in the discipline, explicitly with reference to what they produced, and implicitly in terms perhaps of what they could have (or should have) produced but did not. Partly, such arguments are based on genuine scientific concerns, partly on pure polemics, but not occasionally are these confounded. It is not the intention in this paper to try and sort these things out on the basis of another survey of research in sociology and social anthropology, nor is it intended to project a model of sociology of Indian sociology and then pronounce judgments on which sociologists contributed how much to sociological knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Suffice it to say, one feels by and large, that the established sociologists

(and social anthropologists) of the post-independence era preferred to deal with *relatively* less important questions

Established sociology which got 'transferred' with the transfer of power to the Indian people, not unnaturally carried on its research vigorously through its initial inertia, much the same way as colonial political, economic and social institutions carried on their vigorous existence in free India. Thus, the stalwarts in sociology provided stimulating work on religion, caste, class and village on the basis of painstaking empirical research.<sup>2</sup> Two theoretical streams, the functionalist and the structuralist, were running parallel, though doubtless the former was the mainstream and ahead in academic recognition

1 See Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *Sociology of Indian Sociology*, 1979, Allied, Bombay

2 I have in mind here mainly the works of Professors M N Srinivas, S C Dube, Ramkrishna Mukherjee, R N Saxena and D N Majumdar



However, it would appear strange that sociology in general could remain so unaffected by some of the crucial cataclysms of the time. For example, the share-croppers' movement for a larger share of the produce (*tebhaga*) in the eastern belt, the communal carnage that ripped the country into two, the Telengana peasant revolt that rocked Hyderabad State, the pan-Indian Bhoo-dan-Gramdan sarvodaya movement, and others remained largely unnoticed. In fact it is somewhat amusing to find the concern of one of our senior scholars with communal tension in Uganda.<sup>3</sup>

One cannot claim that this pattern of remaining unaffected by societal upheavals has altered very much for sociologists. Thus, the massive influx of refugees from East Pakistan in 1969-70,<sup>4</sup> the insurrectionary movement aimed at establishing a new and 'just' social order, the current wave of sub-nationalism in the north-east, by and large, have found the sociologist napping. However, notwithstanding these observations, the discipline, it must be acknowledged, has not remained static. The old and the young in it the 'radical' and the 'conservative, the 'conformists' and the 'non-conformists', have all been interacting, providing considerable mutual stimulation, and in the process have brought in a new vitality to the discipline which should show in the near future.

The note inviting this essay proposes that 'each essay would probably raise questions about some facet of the contemporary social reality and suggest how we might go about answering them'. The growth and development of my own present research, since its origin in the early sixties as a research student, has followed a more-or-less steady trajectory which can be fruitfully described from its initiation, its subsequent stage, to its present state.

3 See Ramkrishna Mukherjee, 'Communal Tension in Uganda', *Man in India*, 1950, 30 2 and 3.

4 A hurried piece of field research, done with great difficulty, is reported in my 'The Great Migration of 1971', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1974, 9 Nos 9, 10 and 11.

It was customary then in the sixties — presumably it continues to be the general practice even now — to advise a research student to review the literature in the various areas of academic interest and then launch a Ph.D. project to fill up some 'significant gap' in the accumulating body of knowledge. This was construed as an opportunity for producing some 'original' work. The universe of academic discourse was thus laid out *a priori* in the discipline by the pundits, who implicitly had to be followed. Quite often, a research student would mechanically replicate a study in a different setting with the help of his supervisor's model. Not that the former practice is professionally unethical, but it certainly constricted the growth of the discipline by providing for easy originality. As for the second practice, the less said the better.

It was in such a context that I found myself a subject of light humoured ridicule for having elected to study gramdan in Bihar — a subject hardly worth working on! What prompted the selection of such an area of research? At this point in time, I can recall my general disenchantment with the existing social 'order' and its arrangements and my search for alternatives. Gramdan was an experiment in creating an alternative societal arrangement — so it was claimed — in which land belonged to the community and not the person, and where 'communitarian' living replaced the existing village system. Naturally, this provided an excellent laboratory for the study of induced social change. Could this become the enduring answer to the 'unsatisfactory' society of the present? If we follow the logic of Ramkrishna Mukherjee's paradigmatic scheme, I would say the research concern arose out of the questions what ought *not* to be and therefore what could be or should be possible.

To be honest, at this stage no clear idea of social change which could meet the demands of research concern and the empirical reality of gramdan, appeared sufficiently satisfactory. The functional school, which predominated, certainly was not of much help, and my general

unfamiliarity with whatever the structuralist school had to offer was an added handicap. Measurements of attitudes — 'then' and 'now' types — studies of customs, practices and so on of the people were useful but far from sufficient for attempting a satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon. However, in spite of these shortcomings, a rough-and-ready framework for the analysis of change, however simple, could be worked out.

The main features which defined gramdan were as follows: when all the households in a village (settlement with a minimum of ten households) voluntarily surrendered their individual rights of ownership in land in the village in favour of communal ownership of the village, gramdan was considered *total*. This sense of communal sharing of property also extended to the lands in share-cropping. If this universal consensus did not exist, a village could still be considered as a gramdan village provided (a) 80 per cent of all the households in the village, both landowners and landless, voluntarily accepted gramdan, (b) the number of such landowners who decided to accept gramdan formed 80 per cent of all the landowners in the village, (c) 50 per cent of the total land owned by those who lived in the village was obtained in gift in gramdan.<sup>5</sup> There were about one hundred gramdan villages in Bihar in 1962, not all of which conformed to the gramdan land-pattern. All gramdan villages in existence, for some time, had accomplished a major, fundamental structural change. Why then did some of these relapse into the pre-gramdan state? It is this question that became the central point of a sociological enquiry.

Logically, two sets of factors were considered crucial to the inquiry: (1) the role of the *sarvodaya karya-karta* (the change-agent), and (2) the conditions prevailing in the villages prior to gramdan, conceptualised as predispositions. Performance of the gramdan villages was assessed in two dimensions. First, it was argued that villages which had ad-

5 Partha N Mukherji, 'Gramdan in Village Berain: Sociological Analysis', *Human Organization*, 1966, 25 pp 33-34.



hered to the gramdan land pattern, obviously had performed satisfactorily, whilst those which had not, did not. Secondly, there were certain social, economic, and political attributes, commitment to which was expected in gramdan. How did the villages score on these, irrespective of whether or not they adhered to the gramdan land pattern?

The burden of stating the crucial variables and the levels of performance, is to indicate that even at that stage of relative theoretical innocence, inductively and intuitively, the performance at the first level came close to examining the basic structure, whilst at the second level it gravitated in the direction of the super structure. The predispositions, in fact, examined the objective conditions of the villages prior to gramdan. Thus the rudiments of a structural analysis, in retrospect, were present in the analysis of change.

Two kinds of conclusions followed, one specific and the other general and abstract. The former stated that 'with the inception of gramdan, given the condition of a tradition of landlessness, villages tend to conform to the gramdan land-pattern under the impact of the "authoritarian" change-agent'.<sup>6</sup> The latter, more generally, was pitched at the level of the system 'The weaker its equilibrium, the more vulnerable a social system will be to contacts with other cultures or social systems, provided it is susceptible to cultural alternatives offered' [emphasis added]. In this case gramdan

6 Partha N Mukherji, 'A Study in Induced Social Change', *Human Organization*, 1970, 29 176. For the purposes of this study, the role of the karyakarta in the gramdan villages was observed in three important spheres of social action, namely, (1) decision making, (2) responsiveness to peoples' opinions, (3) maintenance and operation of village accounts. As operationally conceptualised here, we can say that if the behaviour of the karyakarta is characterized by the three attributes of (1) guidance in decision-making, (2) responsiveness to peoples' opinions, and (3) keeping accounts with the knowledge and co-operation of the people or leaving the accounting to the people, his role is democratic. If on the other hand, he exhibits the three logically opposite attributes, we can say his role is authoritarian (Ibid pp 170-71).

7 Ibid p. 177

provided the model of a new (and therefore 'external') social system, and sarvodaya offered a new set of cultural values in the form of alternatives for favour of acceptance.

This latter generalisation, I realised much later, carried more meaning than had been imputed to it at that time. For, doesn't it raise the crucial question of the possibility of effecting structural transformation through cultural continuity (rather than through cultural disjuncture)? It can be cogently argued that every culture — particularly the ancient — has a vast reservoir of cultural values and items accumulated over centuries of civilisation. Each epoch draws from this reservoir, orders its values consistent with its social system, and contributes to this repository either through importation of values through culture contacts or by recreation of new values through permutations and combinations of the existing ones. The process of reordering, and re-creation of values is a continuous process and is attendant on social change taking place in society. This leads us to a complex area of research and we can appreciate D P Mukherji's insistence on the study of Indian tradition.

Speaking on the occasion of the first All India Sociological Conference in 1955 Mukherji had observed 'If this address were to be delivered a few years ago my emphasis on the need of the study of traditions would have been much less sharp. Meanwhile, I have seen how our progressive groups failed in the field of intellect and also in economics and political actions chiefly on account of their ignorance of and unrootedness in Indian social reality'.<sup>8</sup>

Besides, weren't native symbols and historical traditions (then dead) constantly invoked by Gandhi and Mao in their respective countries in their efforts to effect structural transformations? Wasn't this in the mind of Jayaprakash Narayan while attempting to formulate an indigenous total revolution? Isn't this realisation perhaps dawning upon

8 *Diversities: Essays in Economics, Sociology and other Social Problems*, 1958, PPH, New Delhi

Marxists who now have come to realise the need to be independent and act autonomously by studying the objective conditions in the society and drawing their own policy conclusions?

The second stage of research developed with the realisation that there was need for a comparative dimension to a proper understanding of the relationship between social movement and social change. This realisation was prompted by the sudden eruption and rapid spread of the Naxalite movement in the late sixties, the rare vigour with which it continued upto the early seventies, and the exceptional doggedness with which it persists even now in at least one belt in the eastern region. The Naxalite movement was a clear declaration of rejection of the existing iniquitous social order and called for a replacement by armed seizure of power. Unlike the sarvodaya gramdan movement it had no alternative model to present, but there was a tacit acceptance of the Maoist model. Although scholars in general, particularly in the early seventies, would have been generally taken aback at a proposal for a comparative study of Gandhian and Maoist movements in India — a proposal which was in fact formulated then — a small group of social scientists now accept this, whilst a larger group is prepared to exercise tolerance while such studies are on.

The most important fall-out of this study — still at its preliminary stage — has been the crystallization of a conceptual and theoretical framework linking the study of social movements to social change. The relevant questions that required a theoretical conceptual resolution were the following: *is any change in society, however minor, social change?* *Is any collective mobilisation or protest, however trivial, a social movement?*

In a sense, society is always changing, and yet if it was always in a state of flux there would be no society at all. Hence, we have to identify and classify changes that are occurring within each society. There may be some who would like to distinguish between casual fluctuations around a central tendency,



and social change<sup>9</sup> In order to identify social change we have to be clear what we mean by 'society' or 'social system', with respect to which one has to assert whether any change is taking place, and if so, of what kind It is suggested that a social system may be understood as an arrangement of certain elements, which are its 'parts' These 'parts' may be called 'structure' Therefore, a social system (or a society) is an arrangement of structures However, social systems may range from the family, the village, the factory, to the society or even to an identifiable meaningful patterned social interaction

The structures, it should now become clear, are relative to the social system, and social change would pertain to the social system under reference So, at the level of society as a social system, its elements or structures may be the family, caste, class organisations, the political, economic, ecclesiastical and other structures Thus, changes with reference to the society as a whole would naturally examine the quality and quantum of changes that are taking place with reference to these structures At the same time we should recognise that whilst the social system is to be understood as an arrangement of parts (structures) it is not the sum total of the parts This is in recognition of the philosophical proposition that whole entities have an existence other than as the sum of their parts

It is now possible to classify changes with respect to social systems with reference to the structures that constitute the system under reference Thus, changes can occur (a) within given structures, (b) by the emergence of structure (s) in addition to the existing ones; (c) due to elimination or loss of structure (s) without their being replaced, (d) as a result of replacement of existing structure (s) by alternative one(s) Changes of the first variety are accumulative, those of the second and the third variety are alterative, whilst changes of the fourth types are transformative

The changes of the first variety can be compared to the statistical model of casual fluctuations around a central tendency, but in the long range one cannot preclude the possibility of its charting a trajectory of slow incremental change The changes taking place in a society moving away from feudalism may be largely alterative but its culmination in some form of capitalist or socialist society would indicate a transformative change

To the more discerning eye it must have been already clear that, broadly, change occurring within the structures of a system is being differentiated from changes of the structure (s) themselves The latter situation refers to various orders of structural change, whilst the former situation of change at best is quasi-structural

Having conceptualised social system, structure and change, we are now in a position to deal with the second problem posed earlier, viz, is any collective mobilisation a social movement? It is the submission of this paper that collective mobilisations aimed at accumulative changes are quasi-movements, those aimed at alterative changes are social movements, whilst revolutionary movements go with the transformative changes Hence, it is easy to perceive that most collective mobilisations are quasi-movements, not many are social movements whilst revolutionary movements are rarities However, a revolutionary movement may have to pass through the first two stages sequentially and/or concurrently, before maturing into a revolutionary movement<sup>10</sup>

I have argued that one of the principal weaknesses of Charu Mazumdar was an inadequate appreciation of the role of quasi-and social movements in the maturation of a revolutionary movement. Commenting on the denouement of the peasant revolt in Naxalbari region

of north Bengal the following observation was made 'What in effect happened was that a revolutionary movement was launched by inactivating the quasi-movements that had been operating in an already unstable situation Therefore, not only was the call for revolutionary action premature, it in addition neutralized the very infrastructures without which no revolutionary objective can be achieved'<sup>11</sup>

The comparative study of the two movements brought out clearly the weaknesses of both The Naxalbari movement aimed more specifically at the seizure of power with no clear-cut programme of social transformation The militant struggles in north Bengal were largely centred around economic demands without any structural change in its purview Even this was given up later, as such economism, it was argued, would weaken the effort to seize power, which once obtained would enable a total restructuring of society

The gramdan movement, on the other hand, had a blue print of an alternative social order, it was able to attract adherents, but it did not at all reckon with the dynamics of power that would affect its survival It blithely assumed the cooperation of State power which it believed would help in transforming the society and which in turn would transform the structure of power itself 'The Naxalbari experience enshrined the progressive cumulation of countless struggles, not for a change of the system as such but for a reallocation of the rewards within the system in which individual ownership of landed property remained a basic feature The gramdan movement attempted to reorient the system by replacing individual ownership of land by communal ownership While the Naxalbari movement in its period of maturation found it necessary to struggle with such ferocity for even the very minimum and just demands, the sarvodaya movement relapsed into a mystic trust in a change-of-heart that would usher in a new society'<sup>12</sup>

9 Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *The Sociologist and Social Change in India Today*, 1965, Prentice-Hall of India, New Delhi, pp 216-17

10 Partha N. Mukherji, 'Naxalbari Movement and Peasant Revolt in North Bengal', In M S A Rao, ed., *Social Movements in India*, 1978, Manohar, New Delhi, pp 20-21

11 *Ibid* p 82

12 *Ibid* p 83



At this stage several matters came up for consideration as a result of previous research. Firstly, it was realised that it was not movement *per se* which enabled an adequate appraisal of social change, rather, it was the fact of social conflict of which the social movement happened to be one of several manifestations, that was central to an understanding of social structure and social change. Thus, it followed that conflicts of some scale, no matter what the configuration of interests and mobilisations that occasion them, provide valid areas of research for understanding the constellation of contradictions, their varying magnitudes, and their consequent pressure on the social system for change. It just so happens that I have taken up two social movements for study, there is no less justification for examining social conflicts centred around caste and community or ethnicity within this framework.

The second point is that social reality, in certain contexts, reveals a dimension of its structure, normally *latent*, which could not otherwise have been observed. Thus, a social movement for structural transformation triggers off the bringing together of a whole set of actors, welded into a meaningful and coherent pattern of interactions. The configuration of social interactions at the manifest level may suddenly find itself 'altered' or 'affected' by the surfacing of a different configuration of interacting individuals and groups.

Thirdly, it was realised that the study of social change *per se* was not enough. It needed to be related to an adequate concept of social development. How else could one assess the directionality of change? It was far from satisfactory to just state that a society was getting increasingly differentiated, or that it was approximating the western-centric modernizing model, or that its GNP showed a satisfactory rate of growth. It needed, it was felt, a framework at a different level of abstraction, so that the much discussed processes of differentiation, modernization and growth could be looked at from a different, and

perhaps a more relevant, perspective.

No matter what the interpretation of change, it was felt necessary to identify its directionality with reference to some framework. Since the concept of development cannot be delinked from societal values, it was argued that any change that did not further equality and freedom in the society could not be considered as social development. Again, since these value-laden terms signify very little, they needed to be understood in terms of their counter-concepts, viz., discrimination, exploitation and oppression (DEO) which in turn would have to be operationalised with reference to the culture and structures of societies. Thus, a progressive diminution in DEO would indicate a commensurate increase in equality and freedom, and hence an increase in social development.

Each of these counter-concepts refers to sets of asymmetrical relationships between groups, such that one group or several exercise dominance over the other groups. *Discrimination* essentially conveys the content of a social relationship which is asymmetrical and legitimated by societal norms. Thus, discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, sex, race, can be concretely analysed in terms of the more abstract yardstick of equality or freedom.

*Exploitation* is best applied to the content of economic exchanges emanating from within a normatively defined system of exchange and market. Freedom in such a context would refer to the degree of access to the available economic opportunities and also to the capacity to withstand unequal exchange. Equality naturally will concern itself with the distributive aspects of goods produced and the management of surpluses.

*Oppression* is clearly a political concept which defines the relationship between the dominant and the dominated. It is the means by which the dominant group is able to impose its conditions on those who are weak and unwilling or are deviants. More simply, oppression

is an overt behavioural manifestation of power, which is conceptualised as force. It also implies deliberate impediments and barriers created to obstruct access to power. In such a conceptual framework, the nature of conflicts has to be examined in terms of both the 'stabler' aspects of structure, the more dynamic processes, and their interrelation in the theoretical context of contradiction and change. Finally, it was realised that the manifest and latent aspects of the structure should be explored through a study of recurrent conflicts in the universe in temporal depth. This would provide the essential historical dimension to the analysis of conflict and change.

Two more requirements need to be fulfilled before the paper is concluded. First, a comment on how this essay is 'ultimately grounded in the larger sociological tradition and immediately growing out of one's own research and teaching'. And, second, a brief observation on the discipline of sociology in general.

It is very difficult indeed to identify what has been discussed in the essay with the larger sociological tradition. Among specific identifiable influences, that of Ramkrishna Mukherjee in the development of my orientation is, without doubt, paramount. It started with frequent discussions even at the stage of my gramdan work, and whatever conceptual clarity exists in that piece of research is largely due to my interaction with him. However, this is not to suggest that the orientation which has developed over time is entirely consistent with Professor Mukherjee's. In a very important sense the research guidance involved in the Ph.D. work of Jaganath Pathy<sup>13</sup> helped unfold a variety of research questions. Both Mukherjee and, more particularly, Pathy have drawn from the Marxist theoretical tradition.

Personally, I have not yet been able to understand why the functionalist orientation should be dis-

13 'Political Elite of Orissa', Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1977.



carded lock, stock and barrel as some doctrinaire Marxists try to impress. Nor have I been able to understand why functional analysis should be projected as the most efficient way of going about explaining every social phenomenon, as some functionalist diehards would maintain. I have benefitted by drawing from the Marxist and the functionalist streams without feeling that I am obliged to wear one or the other tag. Where theory and methodology need to be integrated in the course of research, the boundaries not only of schools but also of disciplines must give way whenever necessary. I have already observed that 'a society free of actual or potential conflict is as much of an utopia as a society devoid of any social order is a myth'. The former assumption is the basis of the Marxist and conflict theorists, whilst the latter is held by the functionalists. Both positions are tenable logically. It now depends upon the nature of the problem, the orientation of the social scientist, to evolve a theoretical strategy designed to explain the phenomenon at hand. The extent to which a sociologist or a social scientist is able to succeed in explanation or understanding of the phenomenon, to that measure will his theoretical framework stand vindicated or prove vacuous. I therefore feel that the sooner we get away from diehards and doctrinaires the better it is for the health of the discipline and social science in general. In this matter I am prepared to go along with Robert Merton's advocacy for 'a plurality of theoretical orientations in sociology in the form of a 'disciplined eclecticism' <sup>14</sup>

Of late, those who do not do any sociology but reserve the right of pronouncing judgements on various aspects of theory and method have been proliferating. It is about time sociologists studied their pronouncements and put them in their proper place by carefully examining the philosophical foundations of sociology. For now sociology, thanks to the philosophers of science, is heading from 'crisis' to confusion!

<sup>14</sup> 'Structural Analysis in Sociology', in *Approaches to the Study of Social Structure*, 1976, Open Books, London, p. 51

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# Books

**THE CHANGING MUNDA** by Sachchidananda  
Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1979

THE distinguished author of this book is not just a professor of sociology and one who has authored ten books and a large number of articles, but also Director of the A N Sinha Institute of Social Studies, Patna. He has also the distinction of heading the Bihar Tribal Research Institute from 1962-65. From a person with such a background and experience one expects not just an excellent monograph rich in fieldwork, but also an in depth analysis of tribal life. A legitimate expectation of the book, which is exorbitantly priced at Rs 100, is that it provide some intellectual stimulation to the professional anthropologist and be relevant for social policy concerning scheduled tribes. The book is reviewed with these expectations in mind.

The author's association with tribal Bihar goes back two decades. S C Roy's extensive work on the Munda seems to have provided the basis of this book which is a restudy of the same tribe in today's changing context. The dust jacket claims that it is a restudy with a difference. And what is this difference? I quote, 'It not only records the changes in Munda life-ways and thought-ways since the days of Sarat Chandra Roy but also includes a detailed description of their eco system, demography, kinship and marriage, economic life, traditional political organisation, socio-political movements, modern political consciousness, realm of the supernatural as well as an over-review of the Munda today.' This is nothing but a summary of the chapters in the book. The emphasis is on description throughout, with little or no attempt at analysis except at the end of a few chapters. Where analysis is attempted, it lacks depth and coherence.

Nowhere is the underlying structure sought to be analysed. For instance, the chapter on belief and ritual ends with the following kinds of observations: 'Collective ritual and rejoicing during these occasions help to intensify the emotional appeal of religion' (p 299), 'The social function of religion with regard to diseases and other calamities is to avert these events through magic, omens and taboos'

(p 301), 'The symbolic value of rituals is a sense of presence and fellowship with the spirit' (p 301).

The lack of analytical orientation is also corroborated by the fact that the bibliography does not contain a single reference on theoretical issues. One would have thought that the basic readings of Leach, Levi-Strauss, Durkheim would not have been so totally ignored and for no apparent reason.

The description is good and in places shows depth (for instance, the marriage ritual and the section on *parha* panchayat etc). Everything about the Munda is sought to be included in the book with the result that many important things (like gift exchange, etc) are dealt with in a very superficial manner. Again, the most important thing, from the sociologists' point of view, is missing, namely a chapter on social structure, which would have shown the reader how the various parts (economy, polity, kinship, belief and ritual) of Munda society hang together. The book informs rather than enlightens and therefore will be more useful to the beginner than to the specialist. The Expectation of policy relevance is also belied as the author even in his last chapter, 'The Munda today: an overview', does not make any definite statement about their problems nor offers any blueprint for their understanding and development.

*The Changing Munda* falls short of the standards one expects of an author of such eminence.

Aditi Desai

**SOCIOLOGY OF INDIAN SOCIOLOGY** by  
Ramkrishna Mukherjee Allied Publishers, 1979

PREVIOUSLY printed in the Winter 1977 number of *Current Sociology* (London, Sage) under the title 'Trends in Indian Sociology', Mukherjee's work is a preliminary attempt to understand the development of Indian sociology from its inception to the 1970s. Mukherjee feels that what is needed in relation to Indian sociology is '... not merely an elucidation of what is not known but also an explanation of what may be wrongly known. It is necessary, he argues, to explain 'what it is not' before explaining 'what it is'.



Mukherjee adopts as his frame of reference five fundamental questions one should answer to discern the positive and negative aspects of any social phenomenon, namely, 'what is it', 'how is it', 'why is it', 'what will it be' and 'what should it be'. The attention in Mukherjee's current work is drawn towards a systematic answer to the 'why' question about the development of sociology in a nation State.

Mukherjee has divided the history of Indian sociology into different phases, giving each phase a label such as 'Pioneers', 'Modernizers' etc. This schematic grouping of sociologists is also in terms of their main characteristics or research preoccupations in different time periods. The five reference groups of sociologists which Mukherjee identifies are (1) the Pioneers in the field before India's independence, (2) The Modernizers (like M N Srinivas, S C Dube, etc.) of the 1950s, (3) the Insiders (S Chitnis, Roy Burman etc.) of the 1960s, (4) the Pace-makers and (5) the Non-conformists (Beteille, Epstein etc.) of the 1970s. Mukherjee argues that the primary focus of the Pioneers was on the questions 'why' and 'what will it be'. The preoccupation of the Modernizers was on the 'how' aspect of social reality. While acknowledging that each of these categories may not be homogenous in composition, Mukherjee adopts the position that any variations within the categories usually substantiated how these patterns (or characteristics) emerged and changed over time.

The Pioneers in Indian sociology include eminent sociologists like G S Ghurye, D P Mukerji and Radhakamal Mukherjee among others. The Pioneers emerged during the British rule with a new awareness of social reform and of the Indian tradition. In view of the time and of corresponding social forces which promoted their social appearance, they were more India-centred and self-consciously Indian. Empirical research was strongly advocated by the Pioneers. The outlook of the Pioneers was in no way imitative—often standing their own ground theoretically and producing theoretical formulations which had relevance outside India. Given the stage of development of sociological knowledge in which they operated, their value preference and theoretical contributions may be acclaimed despite the fact that their conceptualization of social phenomena required greater precision, their methodology was poorly developed and their data base rudimentary.

Theory formation was hardly the forte of the modernizers of the 1950s. In Mukherjee's assessment, sociologists of this period sought to appraise reality in the light of the theories handed down from their teachers and colleagues abroad—the latter often having only a marginal relevance in India. The consequence of this uncritical acceptance was that the modernizers could not evaluate objectively and comprehensively the relative use and efficiency of all available theories in order to explain the dynamics of the Indian social organism. Adopting a predominantly structural-functional approach,

most Indian sociologists of this period sought to dismiss the historical approach as pseudo-scientific, while seeking to answer the central question of 'how is it'.

The challenge to structural functionalism, from the beginning of the 1960s, widened the scope of alternatives in Indian sociology with reference to the questions 'how is it' and 'what is it'. Predominantly behaviourist in outlook, the work of the insiders of this period enlarged the scope of both concept-formation and data base, and additionally sponsored efficient methodology and appropriate theoretical orientations. But, as Mukherjee points out, by concentrating on the 'how' question, the behavioural trend could not cut across the conceptual barrier imposed by the modernizers of the 1950s, against the appraisal of reality in an unequivocal and comprehensive manner.

In many ways, the 1960s represented the incubative phase for the emergence of the Pace-makers and Non-conformists of the 1970s. In the 1970s, Indian sociologists began to look back and re-examine the early pioneering efforts in Indian sociology. Non-conformists have been showing concern for an ever more comprehensive understanding of the contemporary social dynamics in India. But, at the moment, in Mukherjee's assessment, the Non-conformists' basis for unfolding social reality in a precise, unequivocal and comprehensive manner is weak and unstable. Or to use his own words 'Their decisive rallying point is negative in character and based on the motto that social science must not be the handmaiden of politics'.

The concluding chapter argues a case for a full and comprehensive understanding of social reality. One of the barriers towards the attainment of this objective is the lack of effective and efficient coordination of theory and research. Mukherjee traces this as belonging to the deductive-positivistic tradition of western sociology. Indian sociology too seems to be caught up in the deductive-positivistic mould and there continues to be an ideological resistance to the coordination of theory and practice. Mukherjee contends that Indian sociology had a different course of development prior to the dominance of the deductive and positivistic modernizers of the 1950s. The works of B N Seal, S V Ketkar, D P Mukerji and Radhakamal Mukherjee asserted the necessity of inductive logic and even posited the view that social development was multilinear.

Mukherjee argues out a case for a secondary level of analysis of alternatives from an inductive base, making use of the null hypothesis. Under such a method, the explanatory powers of various alternatives are brought under examination against a hypothetical null situation which assumes that none of them has any power to explain contextual reality. Inductively derived statistical techniques may be employed to ascertain the validity and relevance of the facts in question. In Mukherjee's view, though a number of alternatives may be found valid and



relevant from a deductive base, there is no objective basis from which to infer their relative powers of explanation and prediction vis-a-vis the contextual reality. Mukherjee calls his method 'inductive inferential orientation' which, he claims, enhances the comprehension of social reality. Such comprehension may only be achieved if mathematical thinking and the statistical logic of inductive probability are brought to bear upon the discipline of sociology.

Mukherjee's book is one of the most important to arrive on the Indian sociological horizon. Compact and cogent in its presentation, yet comprehensive, its extensive bibliography is notable in its own right. His analyses, especially his critique of the Modernizers, are often controversial and could lead to a debate among Indian sociologists — from which, hopefully, the discipline can emerge clearer in substance and direction.

Ramdas Menon

**THE SOCIOLOGY OF DEVELOPING SOCIETIES** by Ankie M M Hoogvelt. The Macmillan Press Ltd, Second Edition. London and Basingstoke, 1978.

THIS is the second edition of a book based on a course on 'The Sociology of Developing Societies' by a Dutch sociologist teaching in Britain. The first edition appeared in 1976 — post Vietnam, after the world got well into the problems of the 1970s. And it has reached us in India in 1980.

To get over with the preliminaries. The book, which gives evidence of tremendous erudition and scholarship, is divided into three parts. Part One is entitled 'Development as Process' and takes the reader through the sociological concepts of evolution and change which are presented as abstract and formal paradigms. One sees all the standard — and some less standard — names from Weber to Parsons. Three chapters and sixty-two pages later, we get to Part Two, on 'Development as Interaction' in which we get an overview of the dependency theory beginning (and one feels ending) with Gunder Frank — although, for some reason, his name does not appear in the index (p 201). Part Three is titled 'Development as Action' and is concerned with a 'grand eclectic finale' that brings together the Parsonian, Marxist and Mannheimian thoughts.

In this finale we have a vision of a utopian society of 'world inhabitants' (p 178), each worth an equal unit in the mechanised and computerised planning process that is essential for such utopia. This world planning authority would take strong action in the desired direction. Its redistribution of wealth would not be a one-time occurrence but would have cumulative effects in that, by drastically reducing the standards of living of the people in the rich world, it would reduce their requirements for industrial production, and hence for raw materials, leaving more to be allocated to the poor world.

Hoogvelt attempts to reconcile several irreconcilables. The link between Parts One and Two only becomes clear after Part Three brings Mannheim in from the blue. We have the puzzling feature of theories that were originally designed to counter Marx being synthesized with the views of the dependency theorists and the Club of Rome (no mention here of the Bariloche Foundation's response to the Club of Rome), to end with a vision of a new society that is fascist — as the quote above shows, the world planning authority will *allocate* more to the poor world to improve their lot. The synthesis — perhaps, attempted synthesis — of Marx with non-Marxists seems to give a new justification for a different international division of labour in a world conscious of raw material scarcities.

The book is written in simple and lucid style, and is likely to convince the introductory reader who does not proceed further with his/her studies. Some general comments may therefore be useful.

It is difficult to be eclectic, and perhaps one must not try eclectic teaching at an introductory level. A student who has never heard of Durkheim, Sahlins, Frank and Furtado, let alone Marx, is not in the best position to assess the quality of the eclectic end product. Further, eclecticism requires that the process of bringing together various strands of thought be rigorous, showing step by step the advances made. If one requires an example of such eclectic procedure, one may refer to the manner in which Marx made progress over Hegel and Fierbach. In contrast to this painstaking progress, the eclecticism of Hoogvelt is crude in the extreme. This itself would be of no consequence if it were not presented to an audience consisting of beginners in the field.

We can explore one example from the book. Although the last section is entitled 'Development as Action', there is no *praxis* in it. In this section one does not even have descriptions/analysis of microlevel field attempts in bringing about development. It is only in the splendid isolation of distance and culture that a *vision* of an egalitarian society can be passed off as *action*. To be fair to Hoogvelt, it is on the question of possibility and management — the possibility of an egalitarian order, and the need for planning/managing it effectively — that she speaks of action. Certainly action will be needed for such a society to be formed. Certainly such a society will require some form of rational planning. But the action lies, not in describing it, but in mobilizing and struggling and fighting for it against those who support it in name only. It is here that class analysis is fundamental. And it is this fundamental element that is missing from Hoogvelt's eclecticism.

Why then, as Hoogvelt asked, was such a course taught? Why then is her book the success it apparently is? Why then are we reviewing it in an issue devoted to Indian sociology?

Is it because we are one of the developing societies that Hoogvelt mentions?



The answers are complex. Truth can be used in the service of deception, and it has been so used before. In the crisis of world capitalism in the post Vietnam, Trilateral Commission era, with energy shortages assumed, there is a need to sound radical. But it is essential not to be radical, since that will destroy the basis of the contemporary world order. What the capitalist system requires is a vaccination, and this book, with its small dose of radicalism provides just that.

This becomes evident when one analyses one's feelings after reading the book. One feels that, after all, Parsons, Frank and Mannheim, in some way, show that a better world is possible, and can be reached, with some changes. These changes take us straight (a few minor blemishes apart) to the new international division of labour. What we have to ask is whom the NIDL serves.

A final point. Development is an area in which we are unlikely to find general truth like  $E = mc^2$ . Development will have to be specific, and any textbook, if it is to be useful, must pin itself down to some specificity or other. This book is too general, too vague. And hence its dream-like yet dangerous quality.

Vinod Vyasulu

**HOMO HIERARCHICUS: The Caste System and its Implications** by Louis Dumont. London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970.

'Any generalised theoretical scheme in the natural or social sciences is in a certain sense a form of life in itself, the concepts of which have to be mastered as a mode of practical activity..' A Giddens

'...structuralism is neither a school nor a movement: the bringing of structure into practice represents a distinctive experience. Accordingly, structuralism is for all who are able to make use of it, in essence an occupation..' R Barthes

In this brief survey of Indian structuralism it would not be entirely quixotic then to compare the structural anthropologist to the Hindu iconographer who deals with the translation or mediation of formal relations from one order of reality to another. Both carry out essentially creative tasks, the difference being merely that whereas the icon-maker moves from an abstract model in his mind to its tangible representation, the sociologist in constructing his models attempts the reverse.

For those structuralists, however, who have turned their eyes to India, these 'home-grown' models are the very stuff structural studies are made of. The presence of a vast and ever-growing corpus of ancient texts further seduces them into this task. Representative of this approach is the well-known work on the caste system by Louis Dumont, *Homo*

*Hierarchicus*, which clearly shows where he and Levi-Strauss part company. For if the latter prefers to intellectualize and de-sensitize the phenomena of caste to the point where it appears but a transformation of a tribal model (as in *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute*, 1963), Dumont, in his attempt to understand the system would like to 'take lessons from the Hindus, Hindus of today and of times past, in order to see things as they do' and in the process to 'realise that they have largely done the work for us'.

Thus, whereas in Levi-Straussian terms caste might be seen as a system of 'concentric' unstable dualism or a system of 'generalised exchange' of goods and services which historically has permitted the incorporation of more and more units into its ambience, for Dumont it is the indigenous rationality underlying the system and conceptualised as the fundamental concern with the Pure and the Impure which is of primary interest.

It is never very clear in the Dumontian scheme of things whether idiom and ideology are interchangeable, for somewhere along the line he says, 'we do not say that the fundamental opposition [pure/impure] is the cause of all the distinctions of caste, we claim that it is their form..'. What is relevant here is that the latter statement enables him to open up a veritable Alibaba's cave of literary treasures — the *Sutras*, the *Smritis*, the *Dharmashastras* — wherein the native mind dwells, forgive the pun, on the pure and the not-so-pure mathematics of caste.

To come back to the main purpose of this survey, I intend to concentrate on *Homo Hierarchicus* not so much to point out the differences within the French Structural School as to use it for a window on Indian Structuralism whose methodological insufficiencies it highlights. The single most important feature linking Dumont's work to that of others who have focussed on India — Pocock, Inden, Marriott, Uberoi, Das, Beck, Khare, Gill, Madan, Nicholas — is the concern with conscious cultural categories, oral or textual. Conversely and in equal measure there is a lack of concern with the politico-economic or what Dumont significantly terms the 'residual' aspects. What is important to note here is that both these features emerged as related phenomena in Indian sociology.

Given this methodological bias, it is not surprising that these scholars should display their considerable talent in the analysis of myth, ritual, dogma, normative rule and language. In the case of Dumont, the emphasis on the spheres of 'meaning' in Hindu social life may be seen as a direct consequence of his humanism which holds that sociology can provide proof of the 'unity of mankind'. In sociological studies the universal can only be attained through the particular characteristics different in the case of each type of society. Why should we travel to India if not to try to discover how and in what respects Indian society or civilisation by its



very particularity, represents a form of the universal?"

There can be no doubt however (and this is true of many scholars who look at India from a western vantage) that such studies have tended to enhance, if not fossilize, the very particularities which they avowedly seek to overcome. This is largely because the assumptions on which they are based are methodologically unsound. Thus the uniformity, in terms of both space and time, of the cognitive framework being investigated, is almost always taken for granted. As Andre Beteille has noted, Dumont sets out to compare the western theory of equality, which he acknowledges as a product of history, with the Laws of Manu that are seen as unchallenged and unchanged.

Even when taken on its own terms, the homogeneity of the cultural framework and the nature of its constraint on members of the society is never demonstrated but postulated in advance. Rather than investigate the lack of fit between the sphere of ideology and 'the raw material which it orders and logically encompasses' Dumont merely justifies it. But, surely, the sociologists' models (unless they are themselves ideologies!) should attempt to mediate both types of social facts — ideational and empirical?

Dumont evades the entire question by relegating the sphere of the play of interests, and internal divisions and conflicts, to a position of conceptual inferiority — relations of force, political and economic phenomena, power, territory, property etc. To confine ourselves to these is — to take a local simile — to entrench oneself in an inferior caste.

This overriding concern with the cultural categories of Indian society, both conscious and supra-conscious (textual), is a welcome move forward in the discipline but it is only by transcending them that the structuralist will have achieved the true purpose of his studies. It is well to remember here that the notion of structure assumes its logical power only through its ability to unveil that which is opaque to the actor though perpetuated through him. Cognitive frameworks, just like languages, change in and through their use and are always a function of men's shifting allegiances. To divorce ideology from process then is to do injury or injustice to the facts.

In this brief space I shall take up only two such instances. Dumont's statement 'Some eight centuries before Christ, (the Indian) tradition established an absolute distinction between power and hierarchical status' is possible only because he has restricted the indigenous notion of 'power' to express merely 'domination' in order to fit his method. If he were to do justice to indigenous theory, power would be seen to invade every social category as 'karma' or capacity. Elsewhere, Veena Das (*Structure and Cognition*, 1978) misses the intellectual challenge of her data when she investigates the mythology of the *Dharmarajya Purana*, and arrives at

the structural categories of Sanskrit Hinduism without any reference to the political nature of this caste document.

My own unpublished work shows that the myth-structure of the extant *Puranas* is a function of their textual, compiled character, which in turn reflects sectarian and caste interests. For the very same reasons, Das's analysis of the *Grihya Sutras* is more satisfying since these are essentially ritual texts concerning a bounded area of social reality, relatively protected from change.

This brings me back to what I referred to earlier — the fundamental dichotomy of subject-fields in Indian sociology which tends to reinforce the theoretical and methodological differences that normally exist in any discipline. If we have learnt to move away from the distinction between sociology and social anthropology, in order better to tackle the complexities of Indian society, we should do well not to re-create it at another level especially since the issue at stake is not merely one of scope but of theoretical exactitude as well. I began this essay by positing an analogy between the iconographer's craft and the sociologist's. It is to be hoped that metaphor will not degenerate into similitude and that the sociologist's model will not assume the specificity of the Hindu icon which has powers over distinct and restricted spheres of human action.

Amrit Srinivasan

**AGAINST METHOD: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge by Paul Feyerabend London, N L B, 1975**

NOT being a scientist, I am severely handicapped in reviewing this book. I find it difficult to evaluate the examples from physics and astronomy used here liberally. In particular, I cannot judge how well the major illustration which is drawn from Galileo's times represents adequately the situation in modern physics or biology. Despite these limitations, I undertake this exercise in the belief that sociology has much to gain and to contribute in such an encounter. This book provides a valuable corrective to the sociologists' strait-jacketed conception of science and its methodology by adopting an essentially anthropological perspective on the process of winning knowledge out of ignorance.

Feyerabend's major task here is the systematic demolition of Karl Popper's (and his followers') notion of a rational and objective 'scientific method'. In the preface, he confesses to his polemical intentions. He wrote this book in order to provoke Lakatos, one of the most sophisticated defenders of rationalism in science, into writing a sharp rejoinder. Unfortunately Lakatos' untimely death left the project incomplete.

To evaluate Feyerabend's critique, it is necessary to begin with Popper's version of the scientific



method Simply put, Popper regards that scientific investigation begins with a problem. A scientific problem arises when observation conflicts with an expectation. This problem is sought to be solved by inventing a relevant theory which, though falsifiable in principle, remains unfalsified. By regarding the first task in science as theory construction or conjecture, Popper avoids the pitfalls of inductivism.

At the same time by emphasising the role of falsification in science he firmly grounds it in empiricism. According to Popper, it is falsification which distinguishes science from dogma or ideology. Every theory, no matter who propounds it, has to conform to the norms of falsifiability. That is, if the theory fails certain empirical tests, it is regarded as refuted. The design of these tests and the criteria and standards applied in judging the result are based on a logic which is shared by the members of the scientific community.

On the contrary, in religion no conditions are set out beforehand which, when fulfilled, lead to its rejection. If certain observations clash with religious tenets the usual practice is either to deny the observations or to state that a particular interpretation of the tenet is wrong. Science, based on criticism and reasoning, is therefore an open and a liberal undertaking.

Popper goes on to argue that because science is open and liberal, it is also a progressive undertaking. Every time a theory is refuted, a new problem is created. This time the solution to be offered has to be a new theory which explains not only the facts successfully explained by the older theory but also those which led to the refutation of the latter. In the process the new theory also accounts for the failure of the older one. Thus science grows cumulatively. Theories which account for more facts displace their lesser predecessors, and science takes a path hacked by critical reason.

Feyerabend, however, regards the above version of science as a fairy tale, as had indeed been anticipated by Thomas Kuhn (*Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 1962, and later writings), who holds that Popper's description fits only the phase of revolutionary change in science which is marked by paradigmatic shifts. According to Kuhn, normal science, or the science practised everyday is more a puzzlesolving variety of science. Resolution of puzzles serves to reconfirm the paradigm. A puzzlesolver tends to become a conformist. For him approval by his peer group rather than the practical merit of his solution becomes more important. Psychology rather than logic determines progress in this normal science.

Feyerabend goes further. He claims that even during the phase of scientific revolutions, irrational factors play a crucial role, as in Galileo's displacement of Aristotelian science with Copernican heliocentrism. Galileo succeeded not because he could

effectively falsify Aristotelian ideas, the weight of evidence and the popularity of Aristotle's view of man and the universe at that time, if anything, made Copernican ideas appear susceptible to tests of falsification. Galileo's advocacy of Copernicanism had to do more with hunch than with sound logic. Having thus settled on Copernicanism, he set about his task using auxiliary theories, *ad hoc* hypotheses, interpretations and analogies which appeal to people, and just plain propaganda. It was only much later when the Copernican ideas had been elaborated and supported by several theories, could adequate empirical support be found for them. This is as it should be, for an infant theory cannot be expected to meet rigorous tests such as a mature theory is expected to do.

Irrational factors, according to Feyerabend, intrude in the context of justification as well. He rejects the distinction often made between the context of discovery and that of justification. He holds that had Popper's standards of refutation been strictly adhered to, science would have perished long ago. No scientific theory would have survived, as none is in accord with all the facts in its domain. In practice *ad hoc* hypotheses and auxiliary theories are liberally used to fill up the cracks in the theories. Reliance on patently irrational considerations has enabled scientists to develop and defend seminal ideas and theories. Hence, it is the history, not the philosophy, of science that provides clues to its development.

Feyerabend's position provides unusual perspectives into the pattern of growth in science. It leads one to reject the notion that the later theories are necessarily superior to their predecessors. Feyerabend equates scientific theories with ideologies. He compares these theories with languages which not only express thought but also subtly shape it.

If scientific theories are like languages, none of them can be regarded as superior to the others. The facts of one theory may only marginally overlap with those of another. Thus, the absolute velocity of earth in Newtonian physics becomes meaningless in Einsteinian theories: later theories do not contain more facts than their predecessors, they contain *different* facts.

Feyerabend rejects even Imre Lakatos' attempt to salvage rationality in science (in Lakatos and Musgrave, eds, *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, 1970). Lakatos argues for the evaluation of entire research programmes, rather than of theories which cannot singly withstand attempts at falsification. For Feyerabend the only rational criterion is that anything (literally anything, including religion, politics and magic) goes. Hence his methodological anarchism.

Feyerabend's anarchism leads him to equate even myth and magic with science, and therefore he advocates *laissez-faire* in the world of ideas. The State should desist from propagating science as



well as religion. Thus, Feyerabend relativises all knowledge and all forms of knowing.

It is possible to concur with Feyerabend on many points. For the students of sociology of science, the Lysenko affair and several other examples of irrationality have become quite familiar. The modern trends in science, especially the close link up of scientific institutions with the State, have resulted in several irrational accretions. Yet, Feyerabend overstates his case. Being a philosopher of science he perhaps would reject rationality of science on the weight of even one counter-example. But the clumsy logic of sociology makes me argue that despite its irrational accretions, science retains a core of rationality which plays a vital role in its development.

Another distinctive feature of science is that it is self-critical and self-reflective. The recent trend of studying non-western systems of knowledge is itself a product of this self-critical feature. It is this feature of science which has led to the revision of even the notion of objectivity in science. Scientists no longer consider, thanks to developments in quantum mechanics, that an observer can observe a phenomenon without being influenced by it.

Now a few remarks on Feyerabend's equation of all systems of knowledge. It is true that one can argue that Carlos Castaneda's narration is factual to those who accept his worldview just as the facts of modern biology, say about the genes, are factual to its followers, but there is a significant difference. Modern science has given the scientist a capacity to change not only his own life but also that of people who are anti-science. No, modern science just does not present a new worldview but it offers a whole new world. This has been possible because technology is welded to science in a way that has not been possible for alternate systems of knowledge.

M.N. Panini

#### THE DIALECTICAL IMAGINATION by Martin

Jay London, Heinemann, 1975.

MARTIN JAY in *The Dialectical Imagination* has given a well researched and penetrating analysis of the history of the Frankfurt School from 1923 until 1950, when the Institute returned to Germany. In India very few are familiar with the Frankfurt School. Yet, intellectual life in the English-speaking world has been profoundly enriched by the generation of German scholars who fled their homeland in the 1930s. The Frankfurt School came into the limelight with the radical student movements that swept Europe in the '60s and with the emergence of the New Left.

immigration to America. The distinction is important for it marks a subtle yet marked shift in critical theory — from an avowedly Marxist standpoint when hopes of a revolution in Germany were still present, to the rise of National Socialism, defeat of the working class and World War II — and their approach remains critical but no longer Marxist in the strict sense of the term.

Jay traces the shifts in orientation and the reasons for it: the sensitive position in which the exiled members found themselves at Columbia, reflection of their fundamental aversion to the type of Marxism that the Institute equated with the orthodoxy of the Soviet camp, and finally a growing loss of basic confidence, which Marxists traditionally had, in the revolutionary potential of the proletariat. Jay does point out the shifts, yet fails to locate them in their historical perspective except in passing. The book would have been much livelier had the Marxism (from orthodoxy to heterodoxy) of the Frankfurt School been contrasted with that of other western Marxists, Gramsci, Lukacs, Bloch, Korsch. Their Marxism differed from that of the USSR, yet they maintained their involvement with the working class. These western Marxists were movement philosophers, at the same time they preserved the humanist and self-critical spirit of Marxism.

Although impossible in a review to cover their entire work, one can deal with one or two areas. Along with Wilhelm Reich, the Frankfurt School's was amongst the first attempts to integrate psychoanalysis and Marxism — it was a bold and unconventional step. Here we come to one of the most controversial figures of the Institute — Erich Fromm — for it was primarily through his work that an attempt was made to reconcile Marx and Freud.

The study of Nazism was the overriding concern of the Institute in the late 30s and early 40s. It had already been preceded by the Institute's first studies of authority, where an attempt was made to understand what were the factors responsible for the rise of authoritarianism and fascism, especially in Germany. As Jay points out, the Institute adopted two general approaches in their analysis of Nazism. One focussed on changes in legal, political and economic institutions, with only a passing glance at social psychology or mass culture. Its basic assumptions were those of a more orthodox Marxism, stressing the centrality of monopoly capitalism, although with considerable refinement. The other approach, followed by Horkheimer and the group around him, saw Nazism as the most extreme example of a general trend towards irrational domination in the West. Although agreeing that it had occurred as an outgrowth of advanced capitalism, it no longer considered the economic sub-structure the crucial locus of the social reality.

The Institute's studies of mass culture were connected with their work on the authoritarianism done in the United States during the forties. The interaction with American social science required

Critical theory was the Frankfurt School's foremost contribution to social theory, and its development may be divided into two phases which coincide with the school's early years in Germany and later



the Institute to come to grips with the question of empirical techniques dominant in American research Jay examines this experience, the tensions faced in confronting these research techniques—and its leading exponent, Paul Lazarsfeld The major work to emerge from this attempt to marry critical theory and empirical research was *The Authoritarian Personality* As it was finally understood, the authoritarian character, in Horkheimer's words, had the following qualities 'a mechanical surrender to conventional values, blind submission to authority together with blind hatred of all opponents and outsiders; anti-introspectiveness; rigid stereotyped thinking; a penchant for superstition, vilification, half-moralistic and half-cynical, of human nature; projectivity'.

The Frankfurt School has had an enormous impact on the twentieth century intellectual history. Even though, by the end, its revision of Marxism was so substantial that it cannot be included in any of its offshoots — its contribution to Marxism early on is impressive Along with other western Marxists, the school helped preserve the libertarian and self-critical impulse of Marxism at a time when Stalinism was rampant, and extended the dialectic to spheres orthodox Marxists had left untouched Labouring in the growing shadow of Stalinism and Nazism, on the edge of the Cold War, they preserved their critical stance on the bourgeois society and refused to become supporters of the *status quo*

*The Dialectical Imagination* demands to be read It is the first comprehensive history of the Frankfurt School and an excellent introduction for readers interested in delving into the works of Marcuse, Horkheimer, Adorno, Walter Benjamin and others of this school

Simrita Gopal Singh

**A LEGACY OF KNOWLEDGE, Sociological Contributions of T Lynn Smith** by Thomas R Ford,  
Joseph S, Vandiver, Man Singh Das (ed) Vikas  
Publishing House, New Delhi, 1980

THIS book contains selected writings of T Lynn Smith — a Latin American (1903-1976) sociologist of the mid-twentieth century whose important writings are spread over a period 1930-1976 The book aims at introducing the scope and nature of Smith's work. Theoretically speaking, the authors have adopted the demographic approach to understand the rural-urban continuum in Latin America, and Smith's work makes available rich data on Latin America which could be useful for comparative study

The writings could be of two-fold relevance to India with respect to problems arising from rural-urban and population shifts However, while using Smith's sociological analysis in the Indian context it should be kept in mind that the character and composition of the population of the two countries

is different, therefore the nature of cultural and social problems will be different Moreover, Smith is less concerned with the study of cultural life

To Smith it was self-evident that Latin Americans could, should and must throw off the shackles of dependency, grinding poverty, malnutrition and low productivity He used scientific method to study these problems, he was of the conviction that, 'skills and insights of social scientists should be applied to the meeting of basic societal needs' and used his findings to suggest adequate policy measures.

Smith who was an ardent empiricist, believed this was the way a science of society could be established, that sociology as a science, was a body of empirically verified postulates These were to be integrated into a body of social theory This theoretical exercise begins with an intuitive grasp, which when followed up by logical procedures of induction and deduction give a body of postulates Further, the hypothesis before it is to be accepted as a verified generalized theory has to survive the test of time Lynn Smith accepts the solidarity, cohesion and social control framework for the analysis of contemporary social problems On the basis of this 'solidarity' framework he considers assimilation and acculturation as important concepts to understand intra-group interaction Development for Smith means 'directed change' In his view, development as a sociological concept has its roots in the aftermath of the second world war, further, that the concept of development as understood by contemporary sociologists has little in common with the principles of Durkheim, Spencer etc

Other theoretical writings included are on human behaviour as being determined by the biological, cultural and psychological aspects there is also a brief description of two rural social systems the first is based on large landed estates and the other is based on family farms He argues that large estates as cultural sieves determine the cultural trait which can be assimilated It is agreed that estates are strong cohesive social systems They therefore resist social change and invention.

Though the selections in the book as such are inadequate for a complete introduction to Smith's sociological thinking it does provide a starting point However, on the basis of what is given, it can be said that firstly, there is an over-emphasis on specific empirical studies Secondly, there is an almost complete absence of material of Smith's thinking as a practising sociologist Thirdly, to make a correct assessment of Smith's contribution to sociological thought, more data would be required on (i) Smith in relation to other sociological thinkers of his times in America and elsewhere (especially those who have worked in the field of rural population and urban studies and (ii) Smith in relation to other writers on Latin America such as Andre Gunder Frank and others

Savyasaachi



# Further reading

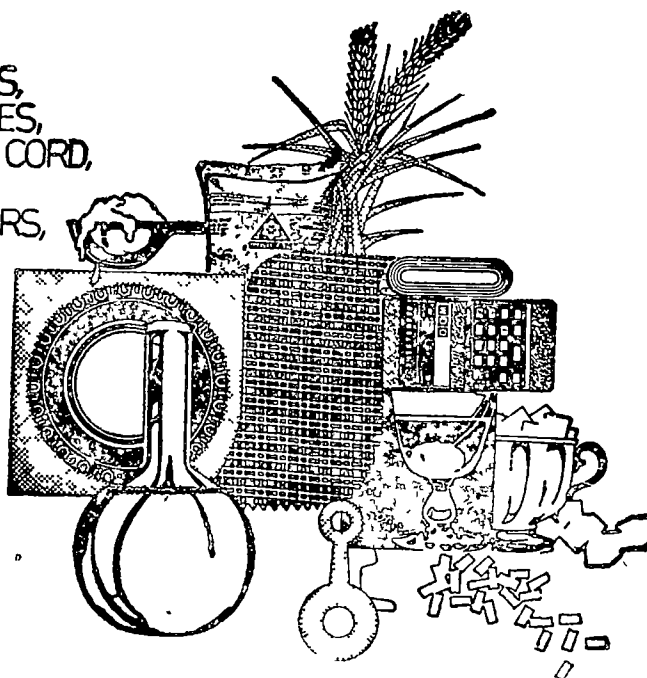
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TEXTILES, SUGAR,  
INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS,  
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES,  
VANASPATHI, PVC, RAYON TYRE CORD,  
FERTILIZERS,  
ELECTRONIC CALCULATORS,  
IRON CASTINGS.

IN THE  
SERVICE OF  
THE NATION

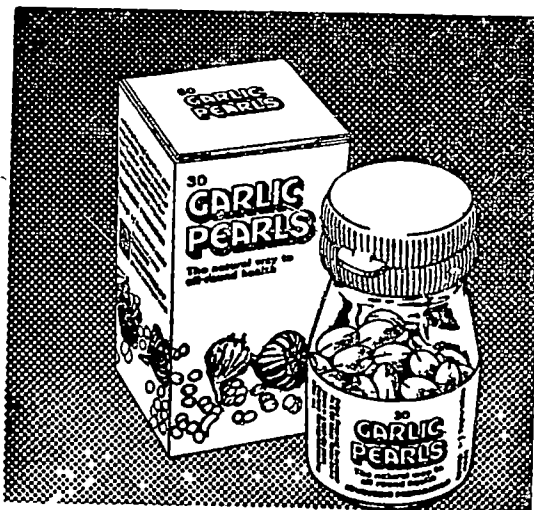


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Dear Reader

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ROMESH THAPAR

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## CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH—1980



**A year of record performance; but "miles" still to go.**

**The main tasks ahead : inter-group harmony, continuous generation of net surpluses, technological upgradation.**

Statement made by Dr. Charat Ram, Chairman, The Jay Engineering Works Ltd., at the Forty-Third Annual General Meeting at New Delhi on August 27, 1980.

Friends,

At the outset, somewhat belatedly unavoidable, I would like to refer to the sad bereavement of our Prime Minister in the untimely and tragic death of Shri Sanjay Gandhi. The ways of God are inscrutable, and we human beings can do little but bear His will. On behalf of all of you and of myself, I would like to convey to Indira, our heartfelt condolences, and we hope that God will grant her the fortitude, to face the irreparable loss and to continue to guide the destiny of our country at this critical time.

Our gathering today is a particularly happy occasion in as much as it marks several accomplishments for the company during the year

- Profits have been at a record level, being more than double of the previous peak achieved two years ago
- Net worth of the company is at a record level, being nearly 20% higher than the previous high of two years ago
- Fans production has been at a record level, being 12% higher than the previous high of two years ago
- The fuel injection plant went on stream

A notable feature of our operations last year was the commissioning of fuel injection equipment plant at Hyderabad. This is a major milestone in the growth of our

company. Sewing machines and Fans have been our staple products for many years, and it was necessary to diversify into technology intensive areas for long term growth of the company. The fuel injection equipment plant has gone on stream in record time, and expansion of the plant is already being planned.

After the set back suffered in 1978-79, due to a near nine months work stoppage at our Calcutta factories, we reverted during the year to our leadership role in the electric fans market. I should however highlight the fact, that the fan market is now becoming increasingly more competitive than ever before. As a measure of governmental policy, small scale industry producers are making rapid strides in terms of new units being set up and expanded production of existing units, both. They have cost advantages on account of lower wages, little R & D or customer service expenditure, and flexible standards of quality etc. Our fans operations have to be contending with this market situation constantly now.

The Sewing Machine unit at Calcutta continues to be a millstone around the company's neck — the annual losses of the unit are massive. The fundamental solution for units problem consists in "cost reduction" in all areas of operations viz. materials, labour etc. The unit is clearly sick and it can be restored to sound health only with the total cooperation and commitment basically of the "labour leadership", the workforce at large are indeed willing. This cooperation from "labour leadership", with

ceaseless financial demands regardless of matching productivity, has eluded us all these years. In the last decade we have had several work closures extending over several months, and two years ago there was a nine months work closure. There is ostensible peace for a few months after each prolonged work closure, and the traditional flood of "charter of demands" again starts. There is, as I perceive it, a conflict of objectives and interest in the situation, between a politically oriented labour leadership on the one hand, and the rest of the corporate workforce and the company on the other. Clearly, we still have "miles" to go at this Calcutta unit of the company.

Power failures in Calcutta region has been a serious problem, these continue to be extensive and unpredictable. Power failures have also caused shortages of basic materials like pig iron, silicon steel, coke etc, low output at these basic products plants has resulted in an inadequate availability on the one hand and escalating prices of basic materials on the other. It is a matter of some satisfaction that production in our Calcutta factories was maintained during the year in spite of the serious power situation.

While the year that has gone by was satisfactory in many ways, we must be aware that we are living in times of special uncertainty, and that we must be organised to respond positively and quickly to unpredictable conditions in materials supplies and prices, the market situation, governmental action aimed at containing inflation hazards to inter-group harmony, inadequate credit for expanding business etc. Of all these aspects of uncertainty, the one which in my opinion rests on the most fragile base is what I term as "inter-group harmony". However, problems there will always be, and as practical businessmen and managers, we cannot but regard them only as factors to be taken into account in our planning and operations. In the background of these uncertain and unpredictable national conditions, I would make a mention about some of the tasks before our company, as a plan of action amongst all levels of the organisation, these in my view are

- (i) To continue to strive for greater "inter-group harmony" in company's operations, particularly at the Calcutta plants
- (ii) To improve productivity of company's investments

All investments of the company must generate positive net surpluses, to adequately compensate the risk capital, workforce etc.

- (iii) To improve workforce productivity at all levels this is specially important at our Calcutta plants.



- (iv) To upgrade technology in all operations in factories and offices, with a view to meeting competition anywhere and at any time including the international market place

For this, to invest in replacement of obsolete equipment and in modern technology

- (v) To dispose off unproductive enterprises and properties
- (vi) To expand our exports steadily, in the interests of national economic requirements.

All the above must sound like a large bill of fare, but it is inescapable and unavoidable none-the-less for our company's operations planning

I have referred above briefly, largely to the salient and practical aspects of our company's operations in retrospect and prospect. I would now like to express some thoughts briefly, on my perception of the national problems, for we are not an island unto ourselves

At the national level, multi-dimensional problems seem to be overwhelming our Prime Minister, the government and all of us. It is said that troubles never come singly. While each of these multi-dimensional national problems has its own immediate genesis and may be short term solution as well, it is my view that the crucial and dominant factor for a stable and durable growth of our economy and the political system is what I term as "inter-group harmony". There is a constantly increasing stress, strain and strife between various social groups in the country e.g. industry and labour, labour and government, government and industry, government and students, students and their teachers, between one community and another, between one political party and another, and so on. The list is literally endless, and seems only to grow rather than reduce. Clearly, a reappraisal of our social system and approach to a resolution of these stresses, strains and strifes will have to be done for achievement of higher levels of "inter-group harmony". I analyse our economic, political, social and other problems, not in the usual narrow economic terms, but in

the larger perspectives of individual and social groups. "Inter-group" relations in our country have been modelled in the western mould based on principles of "power equations" between the various social and pressure groups. This model inevitably gives rise to conflicts leading to large scale waste of resources and effort, which our developing economy cannot afford. While the affluent western societies may have the necessary cushion to absorb the penalties of these conflicts, the not so affluent try to eliminate the conflicts by eliminating the right of dissent as such. We can neither afford the luxury of the former, nor would our democratic commitment permit the latter. To my mind there is need for working towards a genuine Indian model of "inter-group harmony". The Japanese have, instead of blindly adopting the western models, achieved social "harmony" based on their own traditions and genesis. I would like to repeat that if we want to avoid a tearing down of our entire social fabric, we would need to take a clearer and maturer view of stable and durable development of man's life and environment based on essentials of "harmony" in life and work of the individual.

There are a multitude of other national problems such as inflation, recession, inadequate investment, production expansion etc.—and all these problems have to be resolved in the context of ostensibly limited financial resources. It is my belief that our problems are entirely resolvable, and industrial economic growth levels of 15% or so per year achievable within our existing resources of materials, man and money. We have to learn from countries like Japan, South Korea, Taiwan etc. which have all registered growth rates of over 10% per year for over a decade by making their investments pay, our rates of growth and of investment lag far behind these countries. These have to be stepped up substantially in the shortest possible time by whoever can achieve the best results at the lowest investment costs. The basic way of containing inflation and optimising growth is to improve the yields of our assets and investments. The greater the surpluses generated by our investments, the higher will be the funds available for further reinvestment and growth. A recent study shows that output in South Korea for any given invest-

ment is three times of what it is in India. This is in my view the dominant factor which explains why we are far behind in our growth rate. I for one cannot recommend lower outlays for plan expenditure, although there should be drastic curtailment of non-plan expenditure. What is important however will be what we get out of our increased outlays, increasing generation of surpluses for reinvestment. The important factor must not be as to whether state ownership and management would handle these expenditures or the peoples ownership and management will handle these expenditures—whoever can handle them most economically in terms of first investments per unit of installed capacity and thereafter produce at lowest unit costs of production, should be entrusted with the tasks of management of our national investments. There is no inherent conflict between state management and peoples management. The state may be assigned, on considerations of ideology etc. the maximum of development that the state can handle, and the task for the rest of the investment, development and management could be ordered to be managed by the peoples sector. An annual growth rate of about 15% per year must be achieved and is achievable given some essential modifications in approach and directions at the national level.

We are fortunate in having a government headed by a purposeful Prime Minister, and backed by a solid parliamentary majority. There is in my view reason to hope that determined and positive steps will be taken to generate harmonious and productive relations amongst various social groups on the one hand, and the required modifications in governmental policies for achieving accelerated and acceptable levels of economic growth on the other.

So far as our company is concerned, as we enter the new and challenging decade of the 80s, we look forward to accomplishment matching in some measure to our share in the national tasks ahead of us. We are grateful to our shareholders, business associates, directors, and all ranks of employees for their continued support.

**Note:** This does not purport to be a report of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.



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## Tartar

collects at the base of your teeth, irritates your gums and causes swelling. Later on, gums and bone may recede causing teeth to fall out

## Bleeding gums

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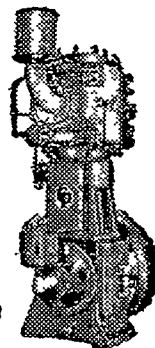
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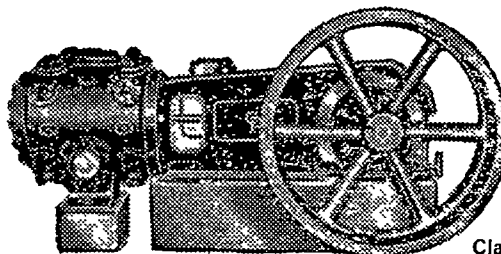
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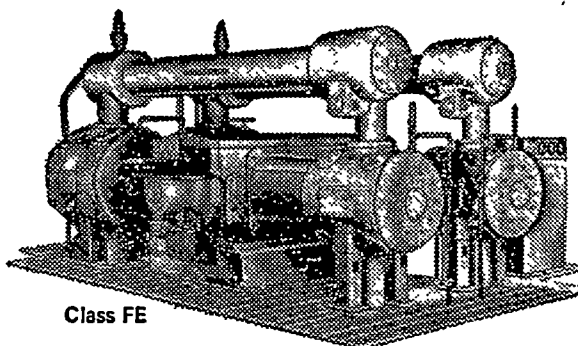
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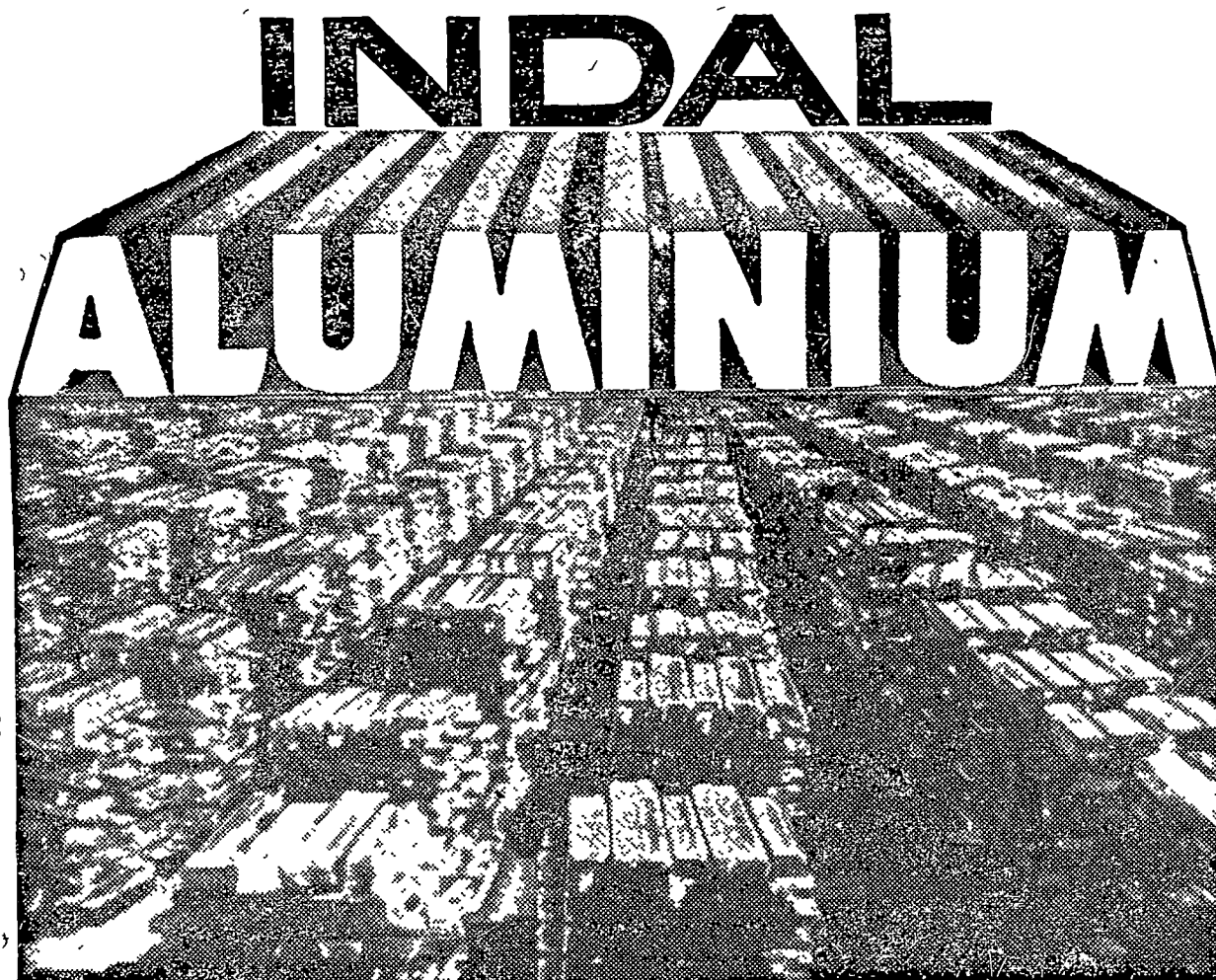
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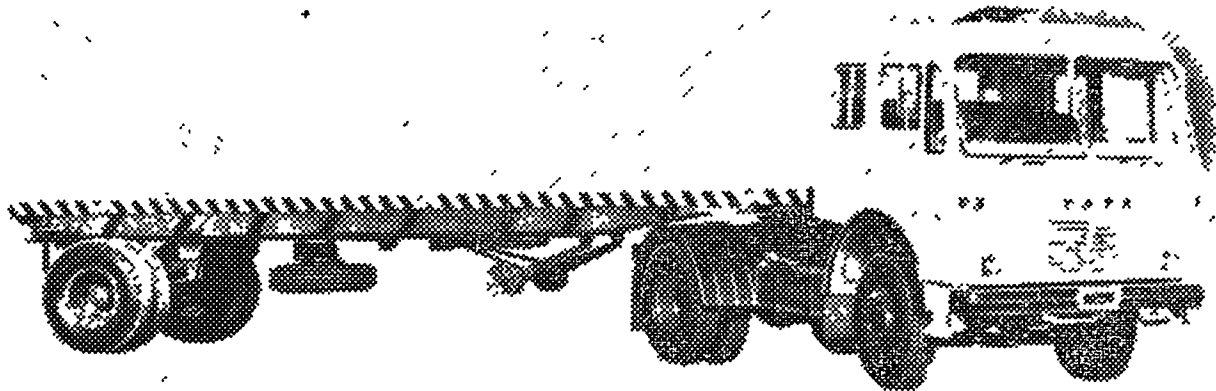
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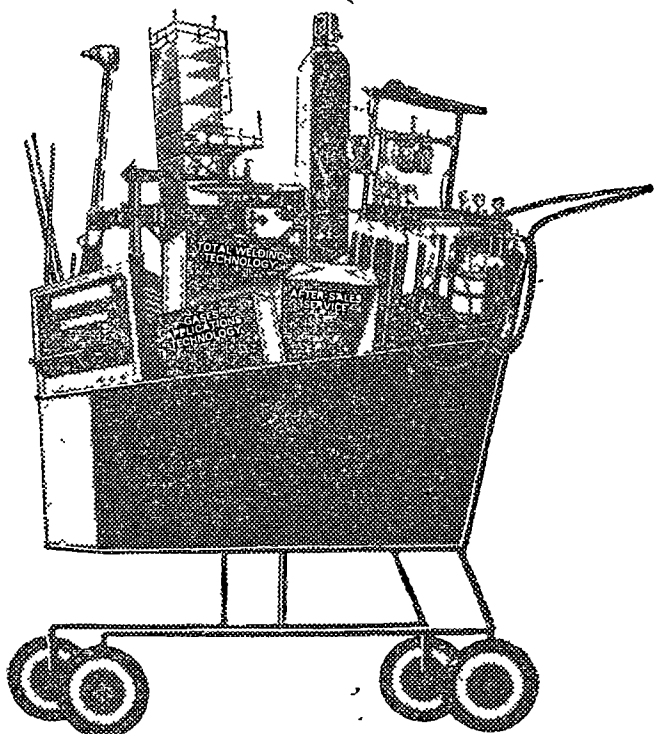
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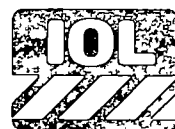
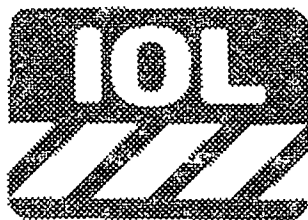
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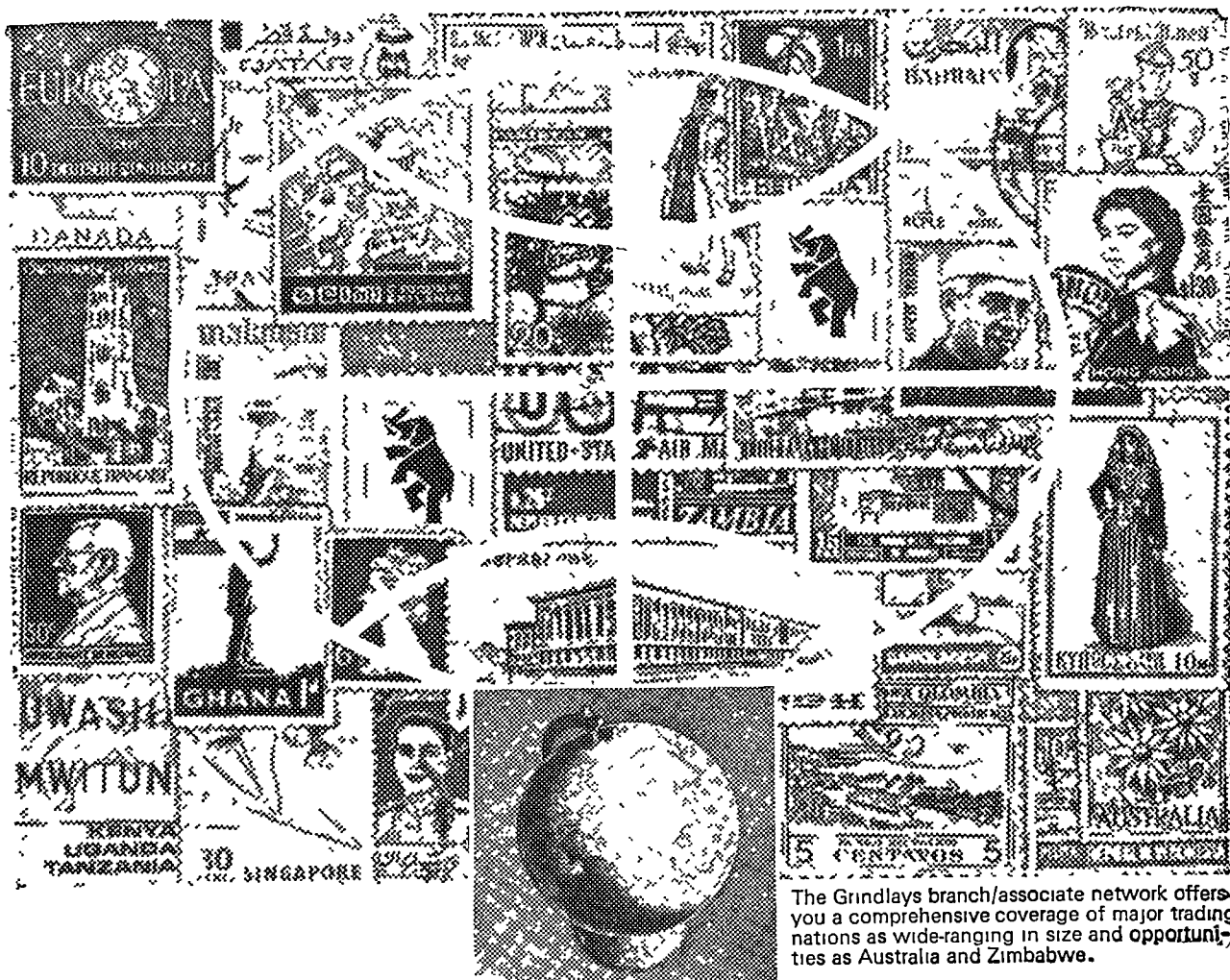
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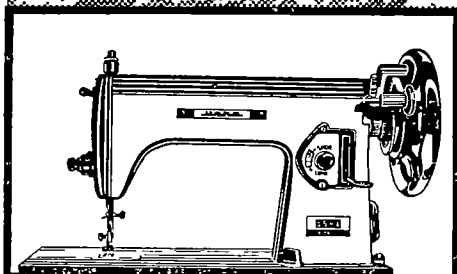
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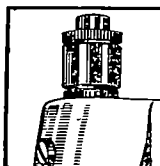
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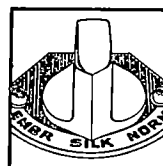
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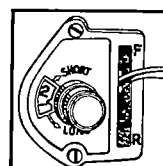
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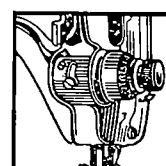
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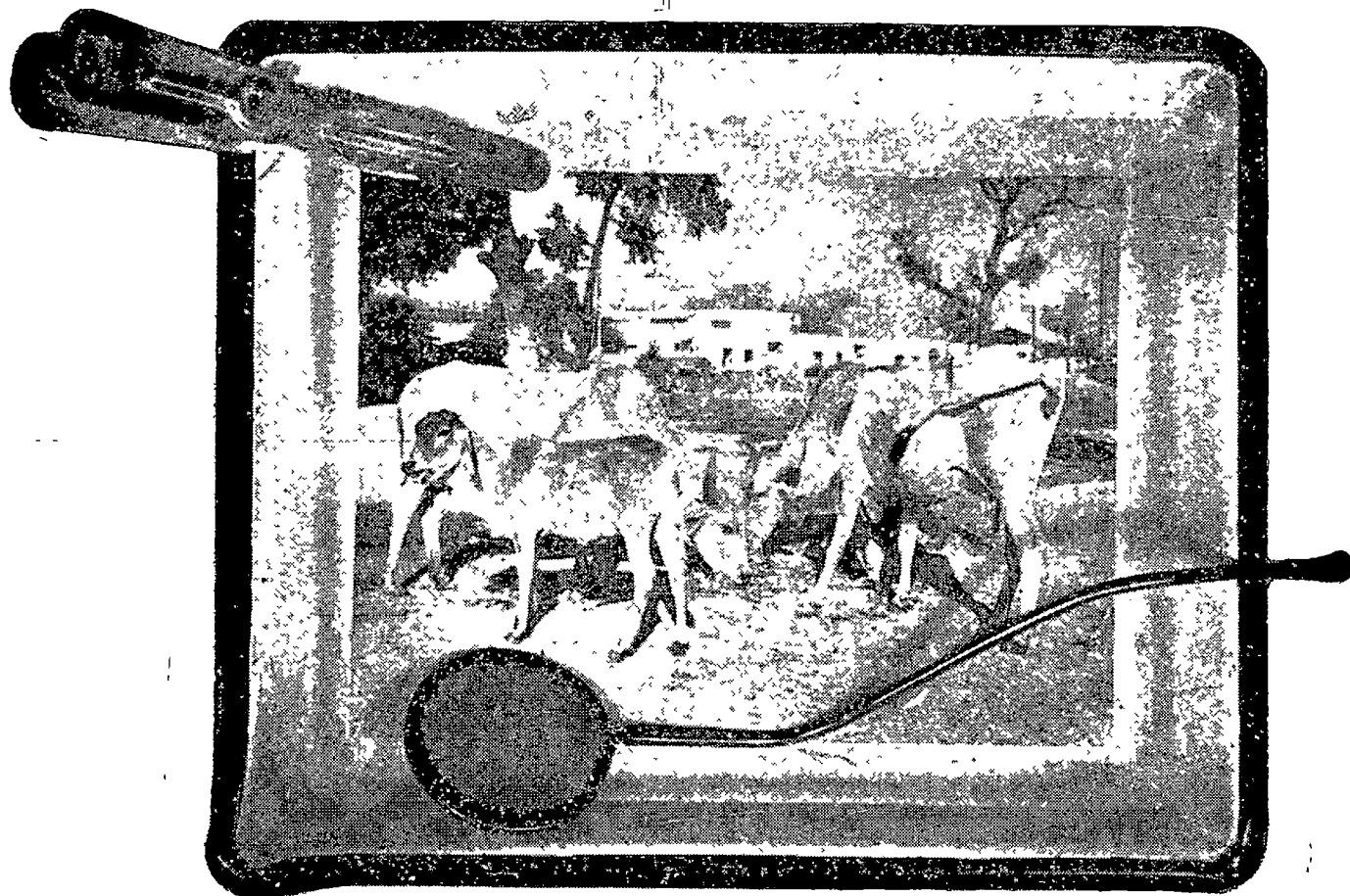
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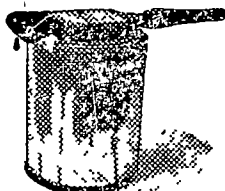
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## **NEXT MONTH: FOREIGN POLICY ALTERNATIVE**



# 255

## RAW POWER

a symposium on  
some aspects  
of oppression

symposium participants

### THE PROBLEM

A short statement of  
the issues involved

### AUTHORITARIANISM

Janak Pandey, Professor of Psychology,  
University of Allahabad

### CULTURE OF INEQUALITY

Rajendra Singh, Department of Social  
Work, University of Delhi

### NEMESIS

A K Lall, Fellow, Behavioural Political  
Science, A.N S Institute of Social  
Studies, Patna

### THE PANCHAYAT LEVEL

S N Mishra, Reader, Indian Institute  
of Public Administration, New Delhi

### PEASANT OPPRESSION

Baljit Malik, educationist  
and social worker

### GANDHIAN PARADIGM

Mahendra Prasad Singh, Director (Research Survey) Indian  
Council of Social Science Research, Delhi

### BOOKS

Reviewed by Kumares Chakravarty, Mahendra  
Prasad Singh, Arun Bose and  
Navin Chandra Joshi

### COMMUNICATION

Received from Gretchen Bloom, Delhi

### FURTHER READING

A select and relevant bibliography  
compiled by Devendra Kumar

### COVER

Designed by Dilip Chowdhury Associates



# The problem

THE term 'Raw Power' is here used as a shorthand for the phenomenon of crude power, unrestrained by rule of law and considerations of justice and equity, exercised either in the social sphere by socially dominant groups and individuals against weaker sections, or in the political-administrative sphere by the government. Raw power is generally more characteristic of authoritarian social contexts marked by extreme inequalities and relatively less penetrated by agencies of the modern State; its minimally present agencies of law and order and revenue collection are usually in collusion with the socially dominant groups there. Raw power may also be typical of modernizing contexts marked by rapid social and political changes producing unsettling effects on vast masses of the population and throwing up uncouth and inadequately socialized political elites.

In our contemporary society, raw power is evident in atrocities on weaker caste clusters in villages and collision of religious communities in towns and cities as well as in machoistic sexual exploitation of women in urban and rural areas alike. It also manifests itself in police atrocities on citizens as well as in less dramatic but no less harassing and bewildering experiences of countless individuals with the impersonal and sluggish governmental organizational octopus they feel beyond their comprehension and control. Besides, the pheno-



mena of big government and big business, by their very nature, necessitate public and corporate bureaucratization at a scale that threatens to devour increasing proportions of the population now preponderantly engaged in independent occupations and professions. Finally, raw power is getting into our style of governance through a new breed of political elites with scant esteem for democratic and egalitarian values and prone to hijacking the public machinery for private and partisan political and economic ends. Given a measure of credit to idiosyncrasy earlier in stray cases of troubled States (e.g., Jammu and Kashmir, the Punjab), such a political style is tending to become more general.

The decline of feudalism, patriarchies and the classical caste system does not *ipso facto* clear the way to a democratic millennium. If they are undercut structurally, they linger in personalities and the culture, and manifest themselves in the behaviour of the elites and the masses, and in the actual authoritarian working of formally democratic political institutions. Authoritarianism has a way of reincarnating itself in a variety of forms in a supposedly modern and modernizing society.

This issue of SEMINAR discusses some expressions of raw power in our society today and some ways out of it.



# Authoritarianism

JANAK PANDEY

POWER is the central concept in any attempt to understand social behaviour. Although at one time or another everyone attempts to influence the behaviour of others, even a casual observer can find individual differences in the desires and efforts for influencing and controlling others. Therefore, in this paper I propose to examine the use of power from the perspective of the powerholder's personality.

In order to understand the role of the powerholder in the process of social and self change, it is important to agree on some systematic meaning in the language of psychology regarding the individuals who are the primarily power-seeking or power asserting personality types. Power motivation is generally defined in psychology as gaining satisfaction from manipulating and influencing others.<sup>1</sup> McClelland<sup>2</sup>

suggests that by indulging in a social process of influencing others the powerholders gain enjoyment. When the powerholders control others, they avoid feelings of weakness and loss of control.<sup>3,4</sup>

Many psychologists of psychodynamic orientations see power needs as representing irrational, neurotic and perverted aspects of man's nature. Feelings of weakness, according to Veroff and Veroff, are associated with high power motivations. They suggest that these feelings of weakness originate from early childhood or from present alienation from others. In a way our attempt to understand power motivation is directly linked with the psychology of 'fascism' and 'authoritarianism'.

power' *Journal of International Affairs*, 1969, 24, 141-154

3. A. Adler, *Individual psychology of Alfred Adler*, H. L. Ansbacher and R. R. Ansbacher (New York: Harper & Row, 1956).

4. Erich Fromm, *Fear of freedom* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1942).

1. J. Veroff & J. Veroff, 'Reconsideration of a measure of power motivation' *Psychological Bulletin*, 1972, 78, 279-291

2. D. C. McClelland, 'The two faces of



ritarian personality' Since the late 1930s, psychologists have made attempts to understand dominance, aggression and, particularly, the pathological power seeking behaviour of some persons because of its obvious significance for mankind. My objective is to trace briefly the nature of the authoritarian personality research and show its linkages with power particularly in our Indian social context

**T**he contention that authoritarianism is a pervasive personality type in Indian society has been supported by western and Indian social scientists. Western observers like Taylor<sup>5</sup>, Murphy<sup>6</sup>, Winter<sup>7</sup>, Hagen<sup>8</sup>, Meade<sup>9</sup> and many others<sup>10</sup> report that Indians, by and large, are authoritarians. Among Indian social scientists, for example, Nandy and Kakar<sup>11</sup>, Pareek<sup>12</sup>, and Sinha, contend that Indians possess such needs and value patterns which are clearly manifestations of authoritarianism

When authoritarianism is a predominant personality type in our culture and when it has close linkages with power, then any deliberation on power, the power motive and its consequences requires an understanding of this personality type. Different people have used varied criterion while labelling Indian culture as authoritarian. For example, some sociologists and

anthropologists<sup>13</sup> argue that Indian culture, like any other traditional culture, is authoritarian. By authoritarianism they mean rigidity in caste structure, social norms, status orientation, so on and so forth. Some other people like Carstairs<sup>14</sup> and Spratt<sup>15</sup> of psychoanalytic tradition have tried to find psychodynamic explanations of this personality type in Indian culture. Before I come back to a discussion related to various developmental aspects of authoritarianism, it is important to examine the growth of the concept itself in psychology

**T**he notion that fascists share a particular psychological disposition or the existence of a distinct fascist personality was first supported by Erich Fromm. In his theory of fascism described in *Fear of Freedom*, Fromm concentrated on the social and historical creation of psychological states, in order to identify the nexus of economic, political and particularly psychological factors combining to form fascism

In brief, Fromm's theory is derived from an existential interpretation of alienation. Capitalism has provided modern man with freedom but has failed to equip him to use his freedom. During the hours of economic crisis, the freedom itself will appear threatening and there may be efforts 'to get rid of the burden of freedom'. Thus, the individual in such circumstances will abandon his own freedom and surrender himself to the will of a leader. So, fascist reactions emerge in response to the fulfilment of the existential longings of modern man. In Fromm's theory, the lower middle class presents an 'authoritarian character' which provides a personality structure conducive for the growth of fascism

Psychologically, according to Fromm, authoritarianism is based on both sadism and masochism. The masochistic element compels the individual not to realize his full freedom and to submit to the leader-

figure and, simultaneously, feelings created by the loss of freedom are sadistically directed towards those who are weak and inferior. The result is that the individual has found a superior and an inferior and the feelings of loneliness get minimized by this newly emerged psychological relationship

However, relationships developed upon masochism and sadism can never be without cost either for the individual or for the society. Fromm's theory suffers from contradictions particularly when some authors tried to apply it to understand the personality types of the political elite of Nazism and their followers. Billing<sup>16</sup> suggests that Fromm's authoritarian sadomasochist theory is only equipped at best to explain the mass support for fascism

**J**ust after the second world war, an alternative methodology was adopted to identify the psychological make-up of authoritarians. Sponsored by the Department of Scientific Research of the American Jewish Committee at the University of California at Berkeley, Adorno and his associates<sup>17</sup> combining European psycho-analytic tradition within the empiricism of American academic psychology started their project in the mid 1940s to identify the 'potentially fascist' individual. Their goal was to locate a personality type susceptible to anti-Semitic ideology and, more generally, to anti-democratic political appeals. The personality typologies research primarily assumes that stable dispositions are reflected in cross-situationally consistent behaviours

The original research, *The Authoritarian Personality*, a major landmark in the history of psychology was published in 1950 by Adorno, Frankel-Brunswick, Levinson and Sanford. Adorno, et al, developed scales (questionnaire) to assess anti-Semitic prejudice (A-S), ethnocentrism (E), and political and economic

5 W S Taylor, 'Basic personality in orthodox Hindu culture patterns' *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 1948, 43, 3-12

6 G Murphy, *In the minds of men* (New York: Basic Books, 1953)

7 Sara K Winter, 'Case studies' In D C McClelland & D G Winter's *Motivating economic achievement* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 275-308

8 E E Hagen, *On the theory of social change* (Homewood, Ill: Dorsey Press, 1962)

9 R D Meade, 'An experimental study of leadership in India'. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 1967, 72, 35-43

10 J B P Sinha, *The nurturant taskmaster* (New Delhi: Concept, 1980).

11 A Nandy, & S Kakar, *Culture and personality in India* (New Delhi: IIT, Mimeographed, 1976)

12 U Pareek, 'A motivational paradigm of development' *Journal of Social Issues*, 1968, 2, 115-124

13 O Lewis, *Village life in Northern India* (New York: Vintage, 1962)

14 G M Carstairs, *The twice born* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1971)

15 P Spratt, *Hindu culture and personality* (Bombay: Manaktalas, 1966)

16 M Billing, *Fascists: a social psychological view of the National Front* (London: Academic Press, 1978)

17 T W Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, E, Levinson, D J & Sanford, R N *The authoritarian personality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950)



mic conservatism (PEC) The authors, however, developed finally a measure of an individual's susceptibility to anti-democratic ideology without specific mention of any racial or ethnic minority This construct became known as authoritarianism and was measured by the *Fascist scale* (*F scale*)

This syndrome of authoritarianism was conceptualized as indicative of individuals who would rigidly follow the conventional (*conventionalism*), show extreme form of *submission* to authority and power, and advocate stern punishment for violators of values (*authoritarian aggression*) Like Fromm, Adorno, et al, recognized a masochistic component in 'authoritarian submission' and 'authoritarian aggression' The potential fascist was considered a psychological weakling who constantly compensates for his/her deficiencies by an exaggerated admiration of power and strength In addition, the authoritarians exhibit an overly negative view of mankind (*destructiveness* and *cynicism*) They undermine subjective feelings (*anti-intra-reception*) and accept super-natural determinants of behaviour and categorical thinking (*superstition* and *stereotypy*)

The authoritarians are preoccupied with power relationships and exhibit constantly power and toughness orientations They are over concerned with issues regarding sexuality and project their own sexual and aggressive motivations on to those around them (*projectivity*) The theoretical bases of authoritarianism were primarily psycho-analytic and were supported largely by interview and projective data In brief, authoritarians are thought to be individuals with strict superegos controlling a weak ego The strict superego and weak ego share the balance for the power and toughness espoused by the authoritarians

Psychologists have put forward some challenges to this personality type conceptualization including a measuring device of authoritarianism Some people have argued that the construct reflected solely the liberal biases of its originators

Shils<sup>18</sup> recognized authoritarianism of the left This led to a development of a construct of dogmatism to encompass both an authoritarianism of the right and of the left (Rokeach<sup>19</sup>, 1960) In India, at least two psychologists are on record regarding the wisdom of generalizability of this western born concept for the Indian societal context Ashis Nandy argues that the Indian fascist handles his sadomasochistic loneliness in different ways According to Nandy the Indian fascist uses 'the dominant Brahminic World-view, he idealizes his loneliness and isolation Also, not driven by his culture to seek consistency in belief and practice, if he happens to get into a group, can be quite comfortable with people propagating human brotherhood, pacifism, democratic socialism, Gandhian politics, or equality of men.'

I would like to agree with Nandy to the extent that a category of Indian fascists are closer to the Rokeach conception of 'dogmatic man' but definitely not all It is true that concentrated efforts have not been made to develop a sociology and psychology of authoritarianism in India, however, various studies have shown its linkages with communalism and other types of conservatism

Recently, J B P Sinha has suggested that the concept of authoritarianism has two components (a) 'behavioural manifestation such as rigidity and structured interpersonal styles, power and discipline-oriented behaviour and demanding postures, and (b) the underlying psychodynamics such as anxiety, insecurity, cynicism, ego alien sexuality, and the paranoid dispositions' According to Sinha, the behavioural manifestations are identifiable in Indians in varying degree but he is doubtful about the presence of the corresponding psychodynamic me-

chanisms In sum, the Indian social scientists do agree regarding the existence of the authoritarian type personality However, they differ to some degree with the original conceptualization of Adorno, et al, regarding its nature, manifestations and its antecedents which we are yet to examine over here

The Berkeley researchers of authoritarianism and many others have tried to understand the transmission of the syndrome from parents to offspring The child rearing practices have been found to correlate heavily with authoritarianism Strong relationship between autocratic family attitudes and authoritarianism have been reported<sup>21</sup> Hart<sup>22</sup> suggests that non-love oriented punishment technique of mother and restrictive attitudes towards child rearing on the part of father strongly influence the development of the authoritarian type personality Some significant findings about the transmission of ideologies across generations, have been reported by Byrne<sup>23</sup> from intra-individual correlations suggesting relationship of son's authoritarianism with both mother's and father's authoritarianism but in case of daughter's correlating only with mother's scores

In the Indian social context, Nandy and Kakar have explored the roots of authoritarianism in the socialisation process They argue that the mother is 'powerful, threatening and omnipresent' A child's over emotional attachment to mother and weak link with father who happens to be a distant entity in the socialization process help in the development of authoritarianism Some others have tried to trace the base of authoritarianism in India through its political, socio-economic history May be the alien rulers for several centuries tried to maintain a distance from

21 D.J Levinson, & P.E Huffman, 'The development and standardization of a balanced F Scale', *Journal of General Psychology*, 1969, 81, 109-129

22 I Hart, 'Maternal child-rearing practices and authoritarian ideology' *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 1957, 55, 232-237

23 D Byrne, 'Parental antecedents of authoritarianism' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1965, 1, 369-373

18 E Shils, 'Authoritarianism "Right" and "Left"' In R Christie & M Jahoda (Eds), *Studies in the scope and method of "The authoritarian personality"* (Glencoe, Ill Free Press, 1954).

19 Rokeach, M *The open and closed mind* (New York Basic Books, 1960)

20 A. Nandy, 'Adorno in India revisiting the psychology of Fascism' *Indian Journal of Psychology*, 1967, 51, 168-178



the people yet with absolute power over them. Distrust, suspicion and insecurity, are some of the costs which emerged from such a situation. Probably, gradually this type of culture became a fertile soil for the development of authoritarianism which finds deep roots in the feudal and hierarchical society.

Psychologists agree to a great extent that the personality type alone is not sufficient to understand human action. Personality is responsive to a social reality and system in which the person is living. Individuals' overt actions depend largely upon the situation at the moment. By situation, I mean the broad socio-economic and political conditions. Thus, authoritarian individuals with anti-democratic ideologies would not put them in action. But such individuals may attempt to create conducive situations first for their full operation and then to find some kind of scapegoat for legitimacy in the construed social reality. To understand fascist and power oriented behaviours, the conceptualization of authoritarianism is quite helpful, particularly the components of authoritarian aggression and submission.

In brief, the so called authoritarian personality is submissive to people of greater power or status and dominant to those of less. He does play these alternate styles of behaviour in an hierarchical set up. Elsewhere, I have argued how authoritarians help to maintain a social system of an ingratiating type.<sup>24,25</sup> The authoritarians develop a greater liking for ingratiating subordinates (sycophants) due to their submissive compliance. However, in a dyad situation where an authoritarian is himself subordinate, he shows his authoritarian submission leading to more ingratiating behaviour on his own part. Thus, with authoritarians in a social system, submission, dominance, and sycophancy become part of a vicious circle.

<sup>24</sup> J. Pandey, 'Ingratiation: a review of literature and relevance of its study in organizational setting' *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 1978, 13, 3381-3393.

<sup>25</sup> J. Pandey, *Social psychological study of ingratiation* (Research Project Report Submitted to ICSSR, 1980).

# Culture of inequality

RAJENDRA SINGH

IT is immaterial whether the mighty and the powerful are a caste, a class, a religious community, or the State. They all have always resorted to, and shall continue to resort to, the use of muscle and machine guns. Terror generates submission and obeisance in a society. For, as I shall describe below, power not only begets its own legitimations but goes one step ahead. It ritualises itself by creating an aura of sacredness, awe and reverence. A cult of power slowly crops up which generates its own approval, its own justification and legitimation. It is an irony of history that tyrants and oppressors have again and again self-legitimized themselves and their power over the people.

All forms of organised atrocities and carnages of man on man have always been carried out in the name of some magnificent ideals and values. No oppression and no exploitation of one group by the other has ever been without a grandiose legitimation. The powerful always seek to define power in terms of authority. Definitions of power are historically subject to the *power position* of the one giving the definition.

Viewed from the above rather extreme perspective, all typologies of power and authority — charismatic, institutional, economic, and those based upon sheer numerical strength — reveal, when unmasked and shorn of their styles and pretensions, one and only one type: power bending and breaking the backbone of the people on whom it is exercised. Typologies are fake. In its essence and in its consequence, power is raw. It is always red in tooth and claw.



In the light of the above remarks, I will present some data drawn from the eastern Uttar Pradesh countryside. My purpose is to suggest an urgent need, especially in the context of the increasing incidence of caste and communal violence in north India, of directing the attention of scholars from their stereotyped frame of research and reflections. Scholars, time and again, reiterate that sources of power lie in such exclusive categories as position of influence and domination, of accumulation of wealth and knowledge, exceptional personal qualities, and in the traditionally accorded esteems and privileges to people. Often the choice of the attributed source tends to be determined not so much by the objective nature of the observed data on various dimensions of power, as by the personality factors of the scholar concerned. What I intend to emphasise is that power as a behavioural category in its empirical manifestations is not entirely rooted in exclusive and patchy sources — giving the impression that each source is insular in itself.

My second purpose is to shake off the notion that an absence of protest, revolt, and rebellion is an index of the justness of power in a society. A disquiet calm is not an indicator of social harmony. Social scientists retreating into the cloisters of concepts and categories tend to study the manifestations of power more in its defiance than in its compliance. Resisted power is often the tip of an iceberg of uglier and darker aspects of acquiesced and even internalized power. Its sheer oppressiveness holds down the agonizing groans and sufferings of people from surfacing, nay, from becoming front page news and a lively topic for parliamentary brickbats. Crucial data on exploitative power thus remain non-data.

Clues to the understanding of sources of power and the modalities of its concrete expressions are rooted in the culture of a society. This is truer of a country like India with a continuous tradition. Our culture is a seedbed of power. For, it has evolved a body of proscription and prescription, permission and prohibition that define not only the

actual behaviour of individuals but also the one 'expected' of them. This includes the behaviour of using force and coercion by one group on the other. Sanctions and legitimacies, norms and standards that flow from it, I posit, restrict directly, or indirectly, the access of one group to the sources of power and open up the door widely for the other. I have used the concept of the 'culture of inequality'<sup>1</sup> to refer to this partial and differential function of culture in the analysis of contradictions of the agrarian system of eastern Uttar Pradesh.

I define culture of inequality as a body of values and norms ingrained in a socio-cultural system in which inequality is deviously justified and oppressions arising from it are acquiesced in or tolerated. Culture of inequality is a concept which mirrors the inequality of power. I will illustrate how this culture being all-encompassing commands the majority of the rural population. But granting its pervasiveness, the same culture permits a few and a minority to dominate the majority and control the culture itself. What comes out of the dialectical manifestation of this minotaur of the culture is the large scale submission and subordination of the majority — the weaker sections such as the Harijans, lower caste/class women and children to the local overlords who rule over people via their control of the culture.

Take, for example, the case of Basti, a representative district of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Besides the 17.4 per cent of its Muslim population, 82.6 per cent of Hindus are hierarchically graded into higher and lower ranks. Confining our attention to the Hindu population alone for the time being, we note the existence of two extreme strata. The top stratum of *ex-maliks* consisting of *brahmins* and *Kshatriyas* alone. These two castes with a population of only 14.4 per

cent, during the latter half of the Raj owned 64 per cent of the land of the district. The bottom stratum is composed of the lowest of the lower: the castes like *badhik*, *bahelia*, *dom*, *dusadh*, *bhangis* and *chamars*, etc — the ex-untouchable (Harijans) of whom the *chamars* alone contribute more than 17 per cent to the Hindu population. In an area of 2 821 sq miles of the district, while the top two castes (with only 14 per cent of the population) owned 64 per cent of land, the *chamars* with more than 17 per cent of the population had just 29 acres of the land in the entire district.

In between the top and the bottom strata, there exist 28 cultivating 'cleaner' Hindu castes. These lower-middle cultivators, among whom *ahirs* and *kumis* are most numerous, comprise more than 57 per cent of the Hindu population of the district and happen to be medium peasants. Traders and businessmen who constitute only 7.16 per cent of the population of Basti are here excluded.

Against the above background let us examine the nature of the differential play of culture on people of weaker and perennially down-trodden sections. Each Hindu stratum is a *semantic domain* and, in Basti, each domain evokes a series of attributional and behavioural images specific to castes of the stratum. Thus there are central concepts of *jati-karma* (behaviour specific to caste) and finally the concept of *Jati-guna* (nature appropriate to the behaviour specific to caste). The caste name *brahman* is a linguistic symbol which identifies a class of people whose attributes and qualities are deemed closer to *Brahm* (God). *Kshatriyas*, being next in order to *Brahmans* in Hindu hierarchy, symbolise a protective secular umbrella for all the castes.

The peasant castes belong, in general, to the *sudra* category which symbolises behaviour and attitude of people predisposed to render service to the upper castes. The ex-untouchables are in fact a victim of the Hindu symbolism which has produced a language that conditions the thought, and the thought, in turn, goes to condition the beha-

1 Rajendra Singh, 'Peasant Movements in Uttar Pradesh', in M. S. A. Rao (ed.) *Social Movements in India*, Vol. I (Delhi: Manohar, 1979), pp. 109-139.

On oppressions of Zamindars in general, see M. H. Siddiqui, *Agrarian Unrest in North India* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1979), pp. 104-142.



viour of people. The name symbols such as *chamars*, *bhangis*, *badhiks* and *bahelias* evoke concrete images of objects and acts held impure and profane by the Hindu society. The term *chamar* refers to one who skins the dead animal, deals in raw hides and is supposed to be devoid of any disposition for intellectual activity. Similarly *badhiks* and *bahelias* are those who trap birds and animals and function as butchers. The *bhangis* are linked with night soil. And these concrete empirical images sum up through their name symbols the exact identity of the weaker sections in the Hindu society. For *Harijans*, *jati-dharma* sanctions, *jati-karma* rationalises, and *jati-gun* reinforces not only a passive surrender to the caste Hindus but an active loyalty to them too.

Aided with the symbols, priestly proclamations, religious rites and rituals, the culture of inequality has evolved a divine right for itself. The caste Hindus are the arm bearers of this culture. Thus there is a severe proscription against the use of silver and gold ornament and of alloy utensils by the ex-untouchables. If the *chamars* owned just 29 acres of land even when their population surpassed the combined strength of the *brahmins* and *kshatriyas* it was viewed, in the context of this culture, as an expected and normal situation. For, the untouchable's 'possession' of the *dharti-mata* (mother land) would defile the mother symbol. Ex-untouchables are a category set apart by an unbridgable 'pollution' barrier.

**T**he same culture, however, when it comes to the use or misuse of the body or flesh, tends to informally relax the strictness of its proscriptions. In fact, it not only tolerates but indirectly promotes negative norms among the oppressed. The norms pertaining to *chastity*, *virginity* and *fidelity* of ex-untouchable women folk is held to be relatively lax. For, these are the concepts which help the caste Hindus to distinguish themselves, like spots on the skin of a leopard distinguishes it from the scavenging animals. The women of the untouchables are thus not only vulnerable to physical

attacks on their chastity, fidelity, and virginity but are also made to imbibe weaker psychological defences against such assaults. The institution of a sort of concubinage in the north Indian countryside in which female recruits are generally from the weaker sections is thus the extension of a culture in which an attack on the modesty of such women is locally not defined as 'rape'. The legal definition of rape usually gets involved only if such involvements of one *malik* (master) come to be challenged by another *malik*. Left without remedial rescues, the victim settles down to making the best out of her unenviable lot. A *chamarin* does not herself expect to be chaste. A sexually delinquent upper caste girl incurs the ugliest abuse when she is referred to as a '*chamarin*'. Thus the permissiveness works only one way

**W**hen the weaker sections are kicked, beaten, chained or kept starving by their *maliks*, neither the victim nor the tormentor treats such violations of human body as torture or atrocity. The victim refers to the oppressors as *mai-baap* (parents), *sarkar* (the authority), and *deo-bhagwan* (God incarnate). These composite integral symbols of parental and divine authority put the oppressors on a high cultural pedestal and their exploitations beyond the modern concepts of atrocity and torture. Here is a conversation I had with a woman who had been kicked thrice in her abdomen by a Brahman land-holder for cutting grass for her cattle within the boundary of his farm. 'Sir you need not bother about me. I have been kicked by the father of this young *malik* (the present victimiser) when I was in the womb of my mother. I took premature birth as a result of that 'laat' (kick) of his father. I have been kicked all my life. I was kicked when I was inside my mother's womb, I am being kicked when I am outside. And Babu Ji (Sir) this child (indicating her pregnancy) has started his career. Babuji for us the whole world is a big womb—it is immaterial whether we are inside or outside, we are kicked all the way'. She had no tears, and worse, she had no anger. This case is of Bird-

pur block at Kapilvastu in Basti district.

I can multiply the morbidity of such psychic apathy and total resignation to the very idea of self-hood robbed by the culture of which the oppressed are the foundation pit. The deeper they dig, the stronger the power. It is subtle, abstract and elusive. It is anonymous power and because of its anonymity it has remained secure for so long. It has moulded not only the conscious but also the unconscious dimensions of the personality of the oppressed. Its ability to mould personality has accorded to it the capacity to force the capitulation of a section. The process of this capitulation is far more violent and bloody than of the reported cases of kulak atrocities in the north Indian countryside.

**V**iolence and the use of crude power being inherent in the cultural ethos and rural social structure, data on non-protest, non-mobilization, and the absence of rebellion and revolt against it is in fact a very disturbing phenomenon for social science inquiry. Power which reduces people to a listless mass of mesmerised people, blind-folded by an historically inherited and contextually reinforced culture is more raw and brute in its manifestation than the burning of huts and houses. Its power lies in the abolition of self-hood and the end of identity of the oppressed which ultimately robs him of human dignity.

The increasing dissent, protest and rebellion, therefore, are the silver linings. They are symptomatic of the reassertions of the lost and the forgotten. And in their rediscovery lies the hope for our society. India, unique in Asia and Africa as a political democracy with a historic civilizational tradition which has not suffered a breakdown, has more at stake than any other country. Therefore, I urge the social scientists and the policy makers not to behave like the shy bride of Basti who reflexibly, at the glimpse of a stranger, pulls down her veil. Let us face the facts as they persist. And this can be done by not confining our attention to the analysis of manifest expressions of crude power in our society but also by measuring its hidden dimensions.



# Nemesis

A K L A L

THE land of 'compassion and non-violence' is no longer quiet. It is in turmoil. The horrifying accounts of gruesome atrocities would make even the devil blush. The language of force is direct, savage and thoughtless. Sheer force overrides legitimate power. The victims are the 'lowest of the lowly'. Each incident of killing outstrips the previous in scale and brutality. Constitutions, codes and institutions that form the 'positive law' have failed to deter the unabated exercise of illegitimate power.

The scene of carnage witnessed in three villages of Bihar during the current year — Parasbigha, Dohiya and Pipra — simply mark the gruesome beginning of a cruel phase of vengeance and violence. The consummate irony of these recent flare-ups is the fact that these took place barely miles away from the place where Lord Buddha attained enlightenment and spread the message of peace, tolerance and non-violence.

Parasbigha, a sleepy obscure hamlet inhabited mostly by Harijans and backward caste labourers and marginal farmers was the target of a midnight holocaust on the 6th February, 1980. Approximately one hundred miscreants armed with rifles, iron rods and other deadly weapons descended on the village soon after midnight and set ablaze about three dozens huts belonging to the Gareris (shepherds) and

some other backward castes. As the flames leapt up and swallowed the thatched roof, nonplussed and terrified inmates of the houses made desperate attempts to escape. But the 'devils at their door-steps' tossed them alive into the fire. Those who remained huddled together in the houses were roasted alive. By the end of this two-hour 'operation cleaning' eleven persons including seven women and two children were either burnt alive or gunned down. The victims of this shameful arson and killing lost almost everything. Even the cattle tethered in the houses were burnt alive.

The massacre is attributed to avenging the murder of a Bhumihar Brahman landlord of the village a few months prior to the incident. In fact, the orgy of violence was neither a war between two castes nor a culmination of old feuds involving families. The murder of the landlord might have provided the spark that eventually lit the fuse, but the root of the cause lies elsewhere. It was the result of agrarian tensions that had been building up in the village for years. The murder of the land-grabbing upper-caste landlord and the retaliatory wiping out of the entire family of Sukhdeo Bhagat, the emerging leader of the backward classes, are symptoms of a deep malaise. It was a clash between those possessing exploitative power and a new status-asserting group. It was the quest for survival.



and the protest against cruelty and inhumanity of man on man that resulted in the killings of the poor and helpless

The backward caste people of the adjoining villages, who saw Parasbigha engulfed in flames and had heard the gunshots and the screams, assembled in the village on the morning of 8th February. The painful and cruel sight of the heap of rubble, human bones and carcasses infuriated them. As the sequel to the grisly episode they first attacked the house of the landlord. While being chased away by the police, a section from the retreating group entered a nearby village, Dohiya, where a number of Bhumihaar Brahman families reside. The obstreperous crowd held sway, by indulging in a mass orgy of rape, beating and plunder. The women belonging to a number of Bhumihaar Brahman families were abused and molested. Many women and children were injured. An old woman tossed down from her roof-top was seriously injured and later died in a hospital. The marauders got little resistance as many of the males belonging to these families were either in jail in connection with the Parasbigha murders or had left the village apprehending arrest. The consequence of the bout between antagonistic groups in Parasbigha became the cause of the reprisal by the backwards in Dohiya. It was a direct, immediate and senseless reflex of the brutal killing of the poor.

Within a few days of these acts of mass killing and violence in these two villages, the poor fell prey to another dastardly attack in a village only 45 kms away from Parasbigha. On a moonlit night fifty marauders armed with deadly weapons swooped down on Pipra, a hamlet 7 kms from Poonpoon police station. After surrounding the village the intruders set fire to all the thatched huts situated in the 'Chamartoli' by throwing kerosene-soaked fire-balls. Awakened to the sudden and indiscriminate sound of gunfire, the hapless Harijans tried unsuccessfully to escape only to be thrown back into the blaze.

This operation against the poor which lasted for five hours led to the

killing of fourteen persons. In this holocaust two families were completely wiped out, though the intention of the mob was to kill all the Harijans. Those who could take shelter in a half-constructed brick house located in the centre of the tola were saved. They kept the raiders at bay by throwing bricks and stones at them. Before the police arrived and the killers took to their heels, the entire neighbourhood was reduced to cinders. Buffaloes, goats, hens all perished along with their owners. In this case the culprits happened to be Kurmis (a backward middle caste) from a neighbouring village, Kalyanchak. There were some kulaks from some other villages of the area.

No doubt the demand by the Harijan labourers for payment of wages fixed by the government and illicit sexual relation of a Kurmi landlord of Kalyanchak with a Harijan woman of Pipra had strained relations between the landowning Kurmis and the landless Harijans. A land dispute involving families belonging respectively to these two castes was the other source of tension. But these were minor irritants insignificant to invite the wrath of the Kurmis. After all, the illicit sexual relationship was twenty years old, and the demands for additional wages do not worry a landlord in a labour surplus economy. The Kurmi landgrabber involved in the land dispute was least worried by the frequent trudges of this Harijan opponent to different courts clutching faded legal documents.

In fact, the suspected connection of the Harijans with the Naxalites active in the area is believed to be the basic reason behind the massacre. The Naxalites are alleged to be responsible for the killings of twenty farmers of the area, mostly Kurmis. The recent murders of Bhola Singh, the President of the *Kisan Suraksha Sangh* (Kisan Protection Association), and Deonandan Singh, its treasurer, are alleged to be the work of the Naxalites.

It is evident from the incidents described above that though the destruction and murders have been sudden, the tinder for the fire, in the form of grievance — real or imagi-

nary — had been piling up for years. The incidents of violence appear to be the result of inegalitarian power structures, and a social system in which inequality has been institutionalized. The different types of power — political, social, cultural and economic are no longer in a state of harmony so as to accord legitimacy to the traditional exploitative power structure.

The convergence of different types of power has been eroded. The hegemony of the caste Hindus and the exploitation of the downtrodden has been upset greatly by the forces of modernization. True, the Harijans and marginal peasants among the backward castes do not have significant control over the means of status attribution and are still at the rock bottom of the economic hierarchy. Even then the signs of their awakening from the deep slumber of passivity and inaction are gradually multiplying.

The incidents at Kafalta, an interior village in Almora district — where 12 Harijans were killed — indicate the extent to which the clash of 'dominant status' and 'salient status' may go.<sup>1</sup> The refusal by the members of a Harijan wedding procession to accept meekly the dictates of caste-deference infuriated the caste Hindus. The Harijans were assaulted for claiming the 'dominant status' of a free citizen of India.

The dominant classes' or the 'centre' as they are often called are not in a mood to accept the emerging normative-structure and value-orientations. Any challenges to their position of ascendancy provokes them to hack down those questioning their supremacy. In a bid to force the inconsistent statuses in different power hierarchies, the exploiters coerce the downtrodden to remain in the place traditionally accorded to them, if necessary.

1. Dominant status is 'the status that ego asserts ought to take normative and behavioural precedence in interaction with alter', while salient is one 'from a number of statuses of ego that alter imputes to him'. See O. M. Lynch, 'The Politics of Untouchability — a case from Agra' in *Structure and Change in Indian Society* (ed.), by Milton Singer (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1968).



through brutal acts of reprisal. The support of the supra-local institutions, always eager to patronise them in exchange for electoral support, pander to their aggressiveness.

**T**hus, the reported incidents of rural violence are retaliatory in nature and are used by groups further up in the social ladder who feel threatened by the challenges of the emerging egalitarian environment. The pre-existing elite groups resist tenaciously the upward strivings of the downtrodden. The instances of obdurate retaliation are, however, not basically a law and order problem. So long as the tensions generated by poverty and rising expectations remain accumulated in the absence of an effective mechanism to defuse them, things are not likely to be any better.

In spite of this, the law-enforcing authority has to be blamed at least for its apathy and negligence in not apprehending the culprits. In many cases the police appeared to be in tacit collusion with the criminals. The fraternization of the police with them is dangerous, but what is more dangerous is the use of legal force surrounded by an aura of legitimacy in a manner inimical to the functioning of a democratic egalitarian social order. Recent years have witnessed a spiral in the instances of crime by 'persons in uniform'. The 'guardians of peace', as they are supposed to be, have become a party to the terrifying scene of rape and slaughter. Among the many forms of violence, 'custodial violence' seems to be the most dangerous.

Narayanpur, a village in eastern Uttar Pradesh has been the victim of the 'private rules' of the 'public authority'. It has been a scene of mass rape and plunder and the accused are a group of U P policemen and personnel of the Provincial Armed Constabulary. Predominantly a Muslim village, Narayanpur has never been afflicted by the virus of communal or inter-caste tension. The police was ruthless with the inhabitants, but the latter tended meekly to accept the treatment meted out to them. The incident which sparked off the rampage by the men in uniform was the death of an old

woman under the wheels of a bus.

The villagers demanded compensation for the dependents of the dead. Some of the people who approached the police for succour were locked inside a room and assaulted. They were subjected to inhuman treatment. Two of the villagers were forced to urinate into each other's mouth. Not satisfied with this 'punitive expedition', a truckload of Provincial Constabulary arrived in the village, entered the house of the complainants and indulged in arson and loot. This was followed by a gang rape of women. Two persons were killed.

An incident of custodial violence has also been reported to have taken place recently in Baghpat in Uttar Pradesh where a woman alleged to be the wife of one of the three 'dacoits' killed in a police encounter was stripped, paraded through the main thoroughfares of the town and raped by the policemen.

**A**nother, bizarre story of vengeance and violence involving the police has recently been reported from Islampur, a village in West Bengal. The village came under sudden siege when policemen destroyed hamlets and assaulted people. The incident occurred as a sequel to a dacoity committed with the active connivance of the police. According to the allegations made in the West Bengal Assembly, the police party attacked by the villagers had in fact gone to the hamlet for committing dacoity. Two constables were killed by the people causing 'the custodians of law and order' to go on the rampage.

The involvement of police in shameful acts of violence shows that the inherited colonial institutions of oppression have not changed sufficiently to suit the spirit of democracy. More than this the machinery entrusted with the task of maintaining law and order have earned the dubious reputation of being brutal and corrupt. The police, instead of keeping the exercise of illegitimate power under check are today the biggest appropriators of public authority as 'private rulers'.



# The panchayat level

S. N. MISHRA

IF the police organization is one of the oldest administrative agencies maintaining at least a minimal presence in rural areas, the Panchayati Raj happens to be a more recent institutional framework for rural reconstruction and development in India. The British rulers, who bequeathed a district based and district biased police system to India, were primarily concerned with stability, order and status-quo in the countryside<sup>1</sup>. The colonial administrators designed an order oriented police so ingeniously that even after three decades of independence, even well-intentioned police officials find it hard to contribute their bit to the processes of socio-economic change in India<sup>2</sup>.

The common man, moving in the small world of his experience, perceives the police as defenders of the status-quo and a drag on the processes of modernization, especially in rural areas. In a seminar held in January, 1972, at M C Mathur Ins-

titute of Public Administration, Jaipur, on the problems of law and order administration in the district, a very interesting point was made that the administration of law, on the one hand, and order, on the other, was regarded as synonymous in the philosophy of colonial administration. We can ill-afford continuing the same philosophy today<sup>3</sup>.

Panchayati Raj institutions were primarily intended to unleash the arrested processes of change and growth. Whether Panchayati Raj is regarded as representing an extension of the community development programme<sup>4</sup> or an institutionalisation of the concept of rural local self-government in the country,<sup>5</sup> the fact remains that as an instrument of development<sup>6</sup>, it generates fac-

3 P D Sharma *op cit*, p 113

4 B Mukherjee, 'Community development and panchayati raj' *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 8 (1962), 577-88. Hereafter *I J P A*.

5 Iqbal Narain, 'Democratic decentralization the Indian image and reality'. *I J P A*, 10 (1963), p 93

6 V. Nath, 'Area development planning at district and block levels' *I J P A*, 11 (1965), pp 74-75

1 P D Sharma, *Indian Police: A Developmental Approach* (Delhi: Research, 1977), p 112

2 S C Mishra, *Police Administration in India* (Mt Abu: National Police Academy), 1972



tors and forces leading to fresh tensions and new disorders, political and social.<sup>7</sup> They seek to stir the system and obviously the first organization or agency which has to confront it, is the police administration at the grass-roots level.

Sociologists regard economic development and political modernization as essentially matters of attitudinal change and basic transformation in the nucleus structure of a community.<sup>8</sup> It is a commonplace experience that an average villager in India is despotically ruled by a Patwari<sup>9</sup>, and Sub-Inspector of Police. The talk of a decentralized village government cannot for long ignore this nucleus system which the police defends almost with committed devotion. The increase in the relative affluence of the higher middle class in the countryside releases some of the new waves of crime which the obsolescent police administration at the village level is supposed to handle. The new structural arrangement brings out not only 'dyarchy' in rural government, but also introduces a fallacious dichotomy between two kinds of administration, namely, that of order and development.<sup>10</sup> The former represents authority and centralisation whereas the latter involves the cooperation of the people.

The present paper explores the theme of the police and Panchayati Raj relationships. The data reported here have been collected from the Darauli Thana in Siwan District of Bihar. The sample interviewed consists of two categories of respondents first, the police officials from various ranks of the thana police and, second, the Panchayati

Raj functionaries, elected members of Gram Panchayats and the Panchayat Samiti.

Though at present the police is absolutely outside the jurisdiction and control of Panchayati Raj in all the States of India, its officials cannot and need not be insulated from direct and intense involvement in local level politics of their respective States. The operational dynamics of Panchayati Raj institutions should make the police station or its station house officer the principal instrument in areas of law enforcement, and maintenance of social political equilibrium, which is being gradually disturbed by the increasing politicization of the countryside.

A study of mutual perceptions revealed that the police officials had scant respect for village level leaders and vice-versa. They narrated stories and ventilated all sorts of grievances against one another's behaviour and approach. But most of them refused to admit to common obligations or a shared ethos and expressed no confidence in each other's integrity.

The local leaders felt that people had more confidence in them than in the police whose protection they would never ask for. According to them, people wanted to reform the behaviour of erring police officials and as such the question of shielding corrupt policemen, or sharing the fruits of corruption with them, did not arise. The policemen, on the other hand, were convinced that the village level leaders were more corrupt. A majority of respondents in the police sample observed that the question of shielding corrupt politicians by policemen was irrelevant, because most of the junior politicians enjoyed direct protection from the political and administrative seniors.

However, the feelings expressed by both the police and non-police samples concerning mutual hostility should not be regarded as one hundred per cent correct because in actual fact there is a deep collusion between the two as evidenced from a non-police sample in the village. Most of the knowledgeable villa-

gers, with a majority as high 75, 83 and 88 per cent respectively, observed that people did complain against the local leaders to the police but policemen were being shielded by local leaders and both of them were collaborating in the daily corruption and harassment of the people. This analysis revealed that the police-politician relationship under Panchayati Raj is intense, informal and perverse. Further, while the policemen as well as politicians claim to be the saviours and guardians of the villagers, the villagers openly reject this paternal image of their role.

To study the pattern of mutual interaction of Panchayati Raj politics and police administration, a set of one major assumption and three sub-propositions were listed. The major assumption was that the police-politician alliance has been unholy in its operational dimensions. The sub-propositions were

- (i) Ever since the introduction of Panchayati Raj, the crime, corruption and harassment of the people in general have been on the increase in rural areas.
- (ii) The working of Panchayati Raj institutions has politicised policemen, whose integrity and efficiency have considerably been sapped at the district level and below.
- (iii) The politics of distribution of development spoils has led to increased interference by the police in political affairs of rural areas under the local government obtaining there.

The data collected and analysed for the present study provide noticeable evidence to demonstrate that there is a high degree of validity in the statement that the law and order situation in the rural areas has deteriorated in the wake of the introduction and working of Panchayati Raj bodies in the State. Glaring instances of increase in violence in the May-June 1978 Panchayat elections were substantiated by police respondents with facts from official records, while the non-police respondents felt that 'this is the way it appears to be'. The respondents of

7 T N Chaturvedi, 'Tension in panchayati raj relations between officials and non-officials', *Economic Weekly*, 16 (221), May 30, 1964.

8 Cf Yogendra Singh, 'Social structure and village panchayat' in M V Mathur and Iqbal Narain (eds) *Panchayati Raj, Planning and Democracy* (Bombay: Asia, 1969), pp 352-64.

9 N R Inamdar, 'Village democracy in India', in Mathur & Narain (eds) *op cit*, p 10.

10 For a detailed discussion of competitive modality of development administration versus regulatory administration, see M G K Thangraj 'Development Administration', *Africa Quarterly*, 5 (1965), p 115.



both the categories corroborate this increase in the incidence of crime in rural areas.

Some of the reasons listed by the respondents were (a) lack of respect for government authority, (b) negligence on the part of public officials, (c) over aspirations of emerging elite groups, (d) informal relations with policemen, (e) being the vote bank for senior politicians, junior politicians expect political patronage from their seniors, (f) undue interference from politicians and administrative corruption in the body politic. Most established a causal relationship between political development and breach of the law. On the basis of this one could say that the collusion between the police and politicians starts from the higher level and percolates to the lower level. The theory may be substantiated by the much publicised case concerning the transfer of ex-I G of Police, R. Lal

About 65 per cent of the respondents in the combined sample listed several new types of crimes which had increased quite steadily during the last decade — embezzlement, encroachment upon public land and political high handedness — all a result of the new political processes and social imbalances. The political leaders in the non-police sample found the situation 'natural' and did not take any alarming view of it, but policemen treated it as a serious state of affairs for which they were not the least responsible.

Interestingly enough, the new and mounting wave of political crimes in the countryside had little or no relationship with the incidence of conventional crimes like burglary, cattle theft, suicides or murders. The figures here had not increased in any alarming manner, although they did not register any downward trend either. On compilation of the statistical figures of law violation supplied by some of the respondents in the police sample, the following picture emerges:

Some of the indices of politicisation like community awareness, group identification, job motivation and volitional acceptance of legitimisation, when tested for the pre-

### Growth Rate of Political and Conventional Crimes

<i>Types of Crimes</i>	<i>Growth rate during 1968-1979</i>
Political disorders	70%
Communal disturbances	20%
Misappropriation of public funds	78%
Abuse of public land	
property	65%
Denial of social justice	45%
Conventional crimes	20%

sent study were found fairly low among the police officials. Most of them found Panchayati Raj institutions quite inconvenient and irksome in the due discharge of police functions. However, quite a few did accept it as a legitimate political framework within which police operations should be conducted and none of them visualised or even hypothetically proposed the disappearance or winding up of Panchayati Raj institutions. Instead, the Sub-Inspectors and Assistant Sub-Inspectors displayed a deep sense of awareness of the limitations within which Panchayati Raj leaders had to operate. The officials frankly though reluctantly, confessed that the politicians had emerged as the legitimate masters of the police force and their postings, transfers, job evaluations. Even promotions at lower levels were, to a great extent, dependent upon their informal role in the politics of the Thana and that of the District.

Three questions were designed to explore three aspects of the problem, namely (i) the differences in the levels of political awareness, (ii) the extent of realisation of political limitations and (iii) the nature of resistance against the processes of political legitimisation at different ranks of the police hierarchy at Thana level. The data collected confirm and support the ascendancy theory of politicisation in Thana police. The lower ranks of the district police organization (the SI, ASI and Constables) felt that political factors mattered in the functioning of the police in rural areas and as pragmatists they dare

not resist the system and its logical consequences.

Further, these junior police officials exhibited little courage to resist the undesirable effects of Panchayati Raj politics which was really overwhelming at their level. They seemed more pragmatic than their idealistic seniors. They honestly felt that the senior political leaders of the district and State had unleashed political processes in police operations and their own seniors could do very little to arrest or counteract them. Whenever the lower rank police officials took some action against Panchayati Raj officials it was always at the risk of transfer and threats in various forms. Since the lower rank police officials indulge in corrupt practices themselves, they usually cannot go against the wishes of the Panchayati Raj leaders. Usually, when some action is taken against the Panchayati Raj leaders, the literate constables play the role of informants and enable the leaders to avoid threatened arrest. In a majority of cases, the policemen and the Panchayati Raj leaders share the booty earned by corrupt means.

The study clearly indicates that the overall impact of politicisation on the police administration in the village has been serious, deep and far-reaching. It has affected the morale of the police personnel in an adverse manner and gone a long way in making the police-organisation ineffective and inefficient. One may recall here what the Kerala Police Reorganisation Committee (1960) had observed 'when police becomes a tool in the hands of politicians, it is reflected in the lawless enforcement of laws, inferior service and a general decline of police prestige followed by irresponsible criticism and consequently widening of the cleavage between the police and the public affecting the confidence of the public in the integrity and objectives of police force'.<sup>11</sup> Policemen as well as politicians both agreed that the efficiency of work in police stations had decreased to a great extent in the last decade, and they further ac-

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in P. D. Sharma, *op cit*, p. 123.



knowledge that there had been a statistical increase in the incidence of crime and a steep deterioration in its detection owing to political reasons. The maintenance of police records, the adherence to prosecution procedures and the faith in the integrity and sincerity of the policemen had also been weakened.

Some policemen maintained that the diarchal situation had rendered it extremely difficult for them to work. The lower ranks stated that they were handicapped by not having any role to play in decision-making as policy administrators in the field of law and order. Further, the local politicians treat policemen as errand boys. The people pointed out that junior police functionaries were being used by the political leaders for party ends, especially at the time of elections. Policemen did not accept the veracity of the statement, but they did express a desire that 'something should be done to restrain the politician to stay within his legitimate limits of power or direction'.

The processes of politicisation, thus, had created a state of helplessness and frustration among police officials who were becoming increasingly callous, indifferent and ineffective in their behaviour, attitudes and relationships with the people. The operations of Panchayat Raj politics had thus perversely resulted in the lowering of standards of professional ethics and vocational competence of the rural police, as admitted by the police as well as non-police respondents.

The majority of responses underline the conclusion that police indifference is a widely shared experience to which even the police subscribe. Although policemen denied that they had become increasingly callous to public problems, non-policemen asserted that callousness had become an 'alarming phenomenon'. One of the non-police respondents painfully said that the police, if it so wanted, could deprive you even of your legitimate rights. Pointing to his incomplete house, he said that some prominent Panchayat Raj leaders, having animosity against him, bribed the local police and succeeded in starting a case

under Section-144 followed by a civil suit. As a result he had to stop the construction despite the fact that this had been his ancestral home for the last 150 years.

About the effectiveness of the police, the respondents revealed polarisation and wide divergence of views. The police believed that they were not listened to by the civil authorities and the local politicians had been encouraged to manipulate situations against the police for political reasons. A SI said 'I challenged an influential businessman, K C J, for black-marketing, but with all the evidence in my favour, one local Congress politician succeeded in manipulating the situation during the Emergency and convinced the Superintendent of Police that it was a case of local police-julium (harassment)'. But the non-police respondents did not agree to the position. They felt that the police had been rendered less and less effective and even passive by the politicisation at the grass roots through Panchayat Raj.

A general consensus was noticed among the non-police and non-politician respondents that the police had been condoning the corrupt practices of the Panchayat Raj political leaders and, thereby, contributing to the malfunctioning of these institutions. A majority maintained that the policy of condoning or conniving in situations of violation of law had been rendered all the more disastrous by measures to shield undesirable political leaders in power and their political agents and brokers. According to them, policewallas had made adjustments with elected political leaders and as such tended to protect the establishment rather than the people.

A number of respondents opined that once the personal equation was established, the police administration generally surrendered to elected leaders who used the police force to intimidate or even liquidate their political opponents. In their opinion, the police administration would side with Panchayat Raj politicians even in open violation of the spirit of justice and, thereby, contribute to perversion in local politics.



# Peasant oppression

BALJIT MALIK

ONE of the most glaring examples of the credibility gap between precept and practice in the sphere of organisations of rural workers has been the record of the Central and State governments in India during the recent Emergency from June 1975-77. Side by side with Indira Gandhi's attempt to centralize and personalise all political power in her hands, a Twenty Point Programme was announced to tackle various economic problems. One of the twenty points was the declaration that the accumulated debts of all bonded labourers would be written off and that all such persons would be freed from the shackles of a form

of feudal slavery that could not be tolerated in a modern democratic and socialist State. Yet, in blatant contravention of its own programme, the government found itself incapable of tolerating the efforts of peasants to give muscle to officially prescribed policies. The same situation continued under the Janata government.

Under cover of the Emergency in Bihar, in flagrant violation of the 'paper spirit' of the Twenty Point Programme, any form of peasant resistance or protest was ruthlessly suppressed. As reported by the *Economic Times* of Bombay on July 5, 1977, 'barbarous assaults on the lives of peasants were perpetrated by such measures as libera-

\*Reproduced from *International Foundation for Development Alternatives*, September/October 1980.



lization of gun licenses and organisation of shooting camps to train landowners? There are innumerable examples of acts of intolerance and outright brutality in India against attempts by low caste and other poor classes to organise themselves in order to resist their exploitation and improve their living conditions. But it should be enough to give a summarised account here of two particular cases of revolt and counter-repression in Bihar and Maharashtra to illustrate the nature of the forces that are ranged against the emergence of genuine organisations of the rural poor.

The story that follows is the story of a peasant leader, Gambhira by name. The area under description is Chaundadane in Bihar's East Champaran District. Chaundadane is feudal, dominated as it has been by gun-wielding, blood thirsty zamindars for over a century. "There still exist zamindars with many hundreds of acres of land, employing hundreds of sharecroppers, fleeing them and flourishing. The zamindar can, whenever he wants to, beat up any peasant and seize his land, rob the peasant or take away his wife, sister or daughter. All zamindars have guns. Each of them has a regular "army" equipped with guns and other weapons. These "regulars" are settled in separate *busties* by the zamindars, they are given land and all facilities. It is this "army" that fights for the zamindar in times of conflict with the peasants and labourers" (*Frontier*, Calcutta).

It was to fight this highly organised feudal set up of the landowners that Gambhira and his friends organised the peasants into the Kisan Khetihar Mazadoor Sang (KKMS). The KKMS covered an area of more than five hundred villages and fought the zamindars on various economic issues such as tenancy rights and wages. The struggle was carried on well within the law on such matters. But the greatest success was achieved in the struggle against social oppression. The zamindars became particularly alarmed by the new-found self-confidence of the Harijan peasants. They spread the propaganda that the KKMS peasants were communist

terrorists (Naxalites) and decided to take retaliatory action. In collusion with the police, the landlords had Gambhira and his close colleagues arrested, and in the course of interrogation, brutally tortured and murdered. Such was the fate of one who dared to give the peasants their own organisation to further their social and economic prospects and to resist brutal exploitation at the hands of landlords who had exploited them relentlessly for generations.

The fate of adivasi (tribal) peasants in different parts of India has been equally wretched as that of low caste, Harijan labourers and sharecroppers. There is a recent example from the State of Maharashtra of how the adivasis, acting in solidarity with outside but sympathetic change-agents got organized to protect themselves and to combat the powerful landlords but only to find the agencies of the State and the local vested interests ranged against them.

In the Shahada area of Dhulia district in North Maharashtra, in a context of increased agricultural production and technology, a group of tribal (Bhil) agricultural labourers has been involved in a struggle against the high caste landlords of the region. Land in this area until about 1830 was mostly owned by members of the Bhil tribe. But with the construction of railways and roads and the introduction of cotton farming on a capitalist basis, the land-owning pattern has undergone a dramatic change. Through a process of legal and/or illegal transfer spread over a period from 1830 till 1970, most lands formerly cultivated by adivasis have come to be occupied by non-adivasi migrant farmers from Gujarat known as Gujars. Thus the adivasis have become casual labourers on lands that had once been their own. With increased ownership of land in the area, the non-adivasis began to harass the adivasi in various ways. It became fairly common for labourers to be flogged, for adivasi women to be raped and for adivasi homes to be burnt down. And since the non-adivasis practically controlled the elected local and higher legislative bodies,

their crimes against the Bhils went unnoticed and unpunished.

The first outside change-agents to move into the area and to bring the injustices being committed against the tribals to the notice of a wider public were the workers of the Gandhian Sarvodaya Movement. In fact, it was a worker in a Gandhian ashram in the area, a Bhil, who provided the leadership for the peasant organisation and for the Bhil movement that was to spread across Dhulia district. The 'Gambhira of Shahada' was this poor peasant by the name of Amber Singh Surwanti. Contact with Sarvodaya workers had induced him to do something for his people, and in 1971 he and some Sarvodaya workers formed a Gram Swaraj Samiti (Village Liberation Committee). Amber Singh gradually found that it was futile to plead with the Gujars and the administration for the cause of the adivasis, that it was really necessary to develop a militant movement and to struggle to make a dent in the power of the landlords. In course of time he radicalised the local Sarvodaya Sangh and became the leader of a spontaneous though unorganised resistance movement. The movement used simple logic to advance the argument that as the adivasis constituted about 60% of the population, they should own 60% of the land and 60% of the expenditure of the district should be for the welfare of the adivasis.

In January 1972, with the organisation of a Bhoo Mukti (Land Freedom) conference, and in May 1972 with Ekta Parishad (Unity conference), the adivasi movement entered a new phase. Outside change agents in the form of politicised youth workers from Bombay, Poona and Belgaum came into Dhulia and expressed their solidarity with the tribal movement. A new peasant organisation, the Sramik Sangathan, was born.

Besides fighting against the evil of liquor consumption and starting night schools for women and youth, the Sramik Sangathan took up various issues of economic importance to the adivasi peasants. A 50% increase in wages of Saldars



(agricultural labourers), a weekly holiday and fixed hours of work were demanded. The landlords refused the demands in May 1972; a strike covering 70 villages was organised.

The response of the landlords to the work of the Sramik Sangathana took the usual predictable course. They set up a para-military organisation under the garb of a crop protection force on which they spent a sum equal to about US \$ 50,000. Then there followed the typical collusion of the police with the landlords.

But as the Shramik Sangathana had adopted the 'mass line' approach of democratic struggle, it was able to withstand a fair amount of the repression unleashed on it. Its members tested their solidarity and enhanced their strength by resorting to various means of protest, and agitation strike, boycott, satyagraha, gherao, processions and bundhs. In this way the landless labourers became a force to reckon with and managed to extract certain concessions from the landlords. 'All this increased their self-confidence (undoubtedly a great gain, given their background of half-slave status), their militancy and their will to fight'. In fact, 'the quick development of the movement' was an 'indicator of the fact that so-called ignorant, "apathetic" peasants can be mobilised and politicised in a short time when they are organised and see a realistic chance to get out of their centuries-old bondage and misery'—(Maria Mies, *The Shahada Movement, The Journal of Peasant Studies*).

**E**ventually Indira Gandhi's Emergency came down with a heavy hand on the Shahada Movement as well, but not before the peasants had given themselves a viable organisation to protect their longer-term interests.

Those two examples from Bihar and Maharashtra are in no way isolated cases of extreme situations. They are very real indeed for large parts of India and only go to show how efforts to organise peasants are ruthlessly opposed by the local elites acting in collusion with the

agents of the State. It also becomes plain that even though the law may favour the peasants by stipulating minimum wage levels and preventions of land alienation, the custodians of such laws usually have scant regard for legalities that go against their class interest.

**H**owever, it would be wrong to single out India for its non-tolerance of peasant organisations that seek to enable potentially powerful, though presently powerless, peasants to become more powerful. Peasants, and cadres who work with them, face a similar dilemma in S.E. Asian countries. For instance there is the grim example of the fate of peasant organisations in Thailand. The land problem in Thailand, with some local peculiarities notwithstanding, is typical of the problem as it exists in large parts of Asia. Landlessness and tenancy are on the increase in the north, north-east and the central plains. Rents exceed 50% of total production, credit is usually available only at usurious rates which keep the farmers always in debt and marketing is in the hands of merchants who manage to buy up the harvest at cheap prices.

The need for land reform and other agricultural reforms is obviously an urgent one. Yet, since the military coup of October 6, 1976, very little has been heard of land reform even at government level. The Agricultural Land Reform Office (ALRO) appears to have taken a back seat and there is not much talk (as there used to be prior to the coup) of buying up large estates and redistributing the land to tenants and landless labourers.

Landlessness has been the most acute in the North and it is here that a powerful and popular peasant organisation, the Northern Farmers Federation NFF (a chapter of the Farmers Federation of Thailand — FFT) emerged in 1974-75. It was the NFF's aim to press for land reform, fair rents and security of tenure. Interviewed by a Bangkok journal, *The Investor*, one villager remarked 'If you own 10 rai, there is no need for you to join the Federation. If you don't, there is'

Planners, economists, civil servants and politicians in power have a habit of maintaining that the problems of poverty, land hunger and development at large should not be articulated politically and should be tackled at an official level through administrative and technical measures. Yet, under their very noses even the existing (inadequate) laws continue to be flouted. Thus the government's own Farm Rent Control Act was not able to keep rents to a level of the produce, with landlords continuing to demand half the crop. So, in the circumstance the NFF-FFT sought to organise villagers in order to protect their interests and demand their rights.

However, the Kukrit Pramoj government decided to ignore the NFF-FFT and to regard its demands as illegal. In return the peasants and small farmers pressed on with their campaign to recruit more members, to educate peasants about their rights under the Farm Rent Control Act and to expose corrupt officials.

**I**t was not long before the heavy hand of the State came down on the NFF-FFT. From April to August 1975, altogether twenty-two peasant leaders were murdered, fourteen of them belonging to the northern chapter of FFT. Among those killed was Intha Sribunruang, Vice-President of FFT and President of NFF.

Strangely enough, no investigations were carried out to book the murderers and all the murders were quickly allowed to skip the official pages of recent Thai history.

No, the FFT was not the government's cup of tea precisely because it represented the landless peasants and small farmers. The government had its own version of peasant organisations on which to bestow its patronage. These were the Agricultural Cooperatives, the Union of Farmers' Group and the Peasant League (Glumm Chaona). All three were created not by peasants themselves but by the governments' bureaucracy with membership largely consisting of owner-cultivators. Thus, except for middlemen, these



organisations posed no threat to local vested interests

It should be fairly clear from Thailand's experience that in spite of the ILO's high sounding Convention on Rural Workers Organisations, the government does not have much interest in it except to the extent of using U N aid and indeed the ILO Convention itself to prop up its own organisations to support the exponents of landlord based capitalist farming

**K**nown as Igorot in the Philippines or Adivasasi in India, tribal people, who often live in mountain areas or along the fringes of forests, usually face more threats than other deprived groups when rural development programmes come along to impinge on their lives

Tribals everywhere have a common history of being told by others that they are primitive savages, their religion is animistic and backward, or in other words they are not a good example of human civilisation. They are also accused of destroying forests by their harmful slash and burn methods of cultivation and holding up progress by their general attitude of resistance to change. Moreover, they have also been the victims of outright land-grabbing by non-tribal outsiders from the plains who have over the years driven them from their family plots of land and self-sufficient agrarian systems to become landless labourers on what used to be their own land.

The phenomenon briefly sketched above is dramatically evident in the struggle now going on between Philippine government authorities and the Igorot people who live in the Cordillera mountains of Northern Luzon. The Igorot people here consist of the Kalingas, Bontoks, Ifugaos, Benguets and Apayaos, in total 500,000 of them.

For centuries the Bontoks and Kalingas have ingeniously carved terraces into the mountainsides for growing their fragrant mountain rice and vegetables. From the forest they have collected beeswax, honey, fruit, resin and lumber, and from the hillsides copper, silver and gold,

which they have exchanged with the lowland people for cattle and clothing.

Now the Igorots are threatened with the World Bank financed Chico River Basin Development Project. The project entails the construction of 4 huge dams along the Chico and Pasil rivers, covering a catchment area of 3 149 square kilometers and will submerge 27 53 square kilometers of land.

Chico II will destroy 500 houses making 3000 Bontoks homeless and flood 120 hectares of fertile rice lands. Chico IV will displace 672 families and flood 315 million worth of rice lands. In all, this project will uproot 1000 Bontok and Kalinga families in 16 villages.

The World Bank has approved a loan of 50 million to finance the project, a further 74,415,000 coming from the West German Government.

**B**ut the Igorots do not want the project. The reasons for their reluctance are obvious. The Government wants to go ahead because it believes the project will reduce import expenditures for crude oil used in power irrigation.

According to a report from the American journalist, Bernard Wideman, 'The government had been considering the dams since the 1960s, but the high cost of construction made them economically unfeasible until 1973 when the increased price of oil revised the cost/benefit equation for the dams, according to the government. However, an independent economist who has gone over the economic analysis of the project says that the government economists did not bother to calculate costs for the lost production of the lands to be flooded, nor for the expenses of purchasing the village lands and the resettlement area lands, let alone the social costs. He claims that if these costs are included, the cost-benefit equation does not justify construction, given the current price of crude oil.'

The government, however, is not sensitive to either Igorot opposition or economic analysis, which does

not vindicate its viewpoint. In order to press ahead with the project and to win local support for it, the government has established Panamin, a para-military organisation to 'persuade' Igorots to accept the project. How Panamin functions and local response to it is described in Wideman's report as follows: 'The director of Panamin told me that the agency accepted the assignment in Chico River because they realized that the dams would likely destroy the Bontok and Kalinga culture, and Panamin wanted to minimize this destruction. The Panamin idea, according to Director Oscar Trinidad, is to resettle the people by village so that their culture based on communalism, ancestor worship, and the peace pact would remain mostly intact. The agency is currently developing a resettlement area near the downstream town of Tabuk. The resettlement programme is already two years behind schedule because of opposition from the tribes-people, none of whom have yet moved to the reservation.'

The head of the resettlement area told me that Panamin would not actually be able to resettle people by village. His particular area will accommodate only 55 families, and they will be chosen from three different villages. The families will be given house lots and farm lands (in what is currently a bare hillside with some patches of trees). In addition, Panamin is constructing a school and a clinic.

**T**he cost of Panamin operations at Chico is running at 20 million pesos annually, not including the cost of purchasing the village lands or the resettlement lands. To gain Kalinga support, Panamin has offered scholarships to all Kalinga high school or college students. The scholarships range in value from 260 pesos per month for high school students to 400 pesos per month for post-graduate students. (A school teacher in the province normally earns only 300 pesos per month.)

In addition to the economic benefit approach, Panamin also uses armed strength. According to the provincial military commander in Kalinga Province, he has trained 70 tribesmen as Panamin guards. A



Panamín staffer confided to me that the agency at one point brought up 20 of its armed T'boli soldiers from the Mindanao settlement. The head of the Panamín headquarters in Lubuagan carries a 45 automatic tucked in his waistband.

However, the Panamín approach has not been successful. Children stand at the site of the road when Panamín vehicles go by and yell 'Panamín get out!' Panamín personnel are not allowed in most of the affected villages, and when Panamín officials visit a village to plead for support, it is usually a quick trip by helicopter. Night travel is discouraged, and when undertaken must have armed guards.

Having been deceived by the government in mid-1975 when the palace said it was dropping its plans for the dams, the tribes people have since taken to armed struggle in place of passive resistance. Following the government's deception, various villages began discussing how they could acquire weapons to match those of Panamín and the provincial military forces. Some villages even considered re-learning the art of making poison darts, which their forefathers had practiced.

The need for weapons and organized resistance became more acute in mid-1976 when the government moved a 700-men battalion into the area to beef-up the provincial forces numbering 150. In response to the situation, the armed force of the Communist Party of the Philippines — the New People's Army (NPA) — sent four cadres into the Chico area. Two years later, the four had become 115, and ambushes of government troops had become a weekly occurrence.

The most powerful of the Kalinga elders, Maclung Dulag, told me that he was offered a large sum of money by a cabinet minister (no doubt Elizalde) if he would agree to convince his people to accede to the dam project. With his powerful body bent into a human boulder, Maclung leaned towards me and said very quietly 'I told him finally that if he kept insisting that I take the money, he should just shoot me because I would never accept.'

From these three glimpses of the oppression being caused to the poor peasantry in India, Thailand and the Philippines it becomes plain that there are serious contradictions in all the talk that is going on about organisations of the rural poor. All the ostensible concern for poor peasants is without exception more than offset by the harm done by international agency programmes in the name of development. While capital-intensive, inappropriate 'development' projects are imposed from above, it hardly makes sense to pay lip-service to the need for peasant organisations, not unless such organisations are seen as being necessary to 'educate' peasants into 'accepting' policies which are not in their interest.

As far as governments in the Third World countries are concerned it is difficult to detect how policy measures at the official level can redress the power balance in favour of the peasantry. Yet 'progressive' governments, which have not completely isolated themselves from the people, can perhaps show a minimum of their 'commitment' to social justice by restraining the kind of intolerance that has come down so heavily on peasant movements.

A helpful supporting move at the official level could be the passing of progressive legislation to protect peasant interests. Although legislation in itself has never known to have been effective as a cure in itself, it could be helpful for providing a legal basis for the redressal of peasant grievances. Not unless there is simply no medicine to heal their wounds with, will peasants embark on a course of 'amputative surgery'.

But, medicine or no medicine, peasants will of course continue to find their own ways of empowering themselves, of creating their own organisations and launching movements to exert their group interests. And should governments prove themselves incapable of providing even limited or reluctant support to such efforts, there would then be little left for the peasantry to do except take its own measures to defend itself and ultimately capture State power.



# Gandhian paradigm

MAHENDRA PRASAD SINGH

Do din parvat ka mool hila,  
phir utar sindhu ka jwar gaya,  
par sounp desh ke hathon mein  
woh ek nayee talwar gaya

\* \* \* \*

Hai Jayaprakash woh nam jise  
itihās samadar deta hai,  
warh kar jiske pad-chimhon ko  
ur par ankit kar leta hai

— Dinkar<sup>1</sup>

POWER which is a fundamental ingredient of politics and an ubiquitous social phenomenon evokes differential responses by different political actors depending on their personal dispositions and cultural and historical milieus. Among these responses, the one that appears most desirable is represented by the attitude that Gandhi brought to bear on power and, for that matter, politics generally. Jayaprakash Narayan (1902-1979), a posthumous follower of the Mahatma, stands out as the most creative innovator of Gandhian Socialism and a paradigm of Gandhian politics, just as Jawaharlal Nehru seems to be the safest bridge between Gandhi and modern science and technology, and Acharya Vinoba Bhave, the most authentic link between Gandhism and normative traditional Hindu humanism.

1 Ramdhari Sinha Dinkar, 'Jayaprakash', *Samdhan* (Patna: Udayachal, 1955 3rd ed.), pp 79-82. Poem composed in 1946.

JP, as he was popularly called, was described in a biographical sketch in 1963 as 'India's foremost dissenter, critic, intellectual nonconformist, and fighter of lost causes that never lose their following'.<sup>2</sup> That characterization remained valid until his death. His passionate quest for an ideological identity took him on a voyage from Marxism through Democratic Socialism to Gandhian Socialism — and in the process he creatively developed the socialist and Gandhian traditions of thought, grappling with some of the deepest problems of Indian democracy and contemporary civilization.<sup>3</sup> He was probably

2 Welles Hagen, *After Nehru, Who?* (London: Rupert Hart Davis, 1963), p 85.

3 This personal odyssey is briefly narrated by JP himself in his *From Socialism to Sarvodaya* (Kashi: Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1959, 2nd ed., preface date 1957). It clearly shows the seminal influences of Marx and Marxists, M N Roy, Social Democrats, and Gandhi and Gandhians on the evolution of JP's thought.

Perhaps the most comprehensive collection of JP's writings and speeches available through regular publication channels is Jayaprakash Narayan, *Towards Total Revolution: Search for an Ideology*, Vol I, *Politics in India*, Vol II, *India and Her Problems*, Vol III, *Total Revolution*, Vol IV (edited by Brahmanand) Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1978. See also Jayaprakash Narayan, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy* (edited by Bimla Prasad) Bombay: Asia, 1964.



the most sophisticated advocate of a nonpartisan democracy and a Gandhian constitution for independent India<sup>4</sup> 'No other Indian public figure', wrote Girilal Jain on the morrow of JP's death, 'has sought to embody so many intellectual currents and cross-currents in himself as JP, not even the incomparably supple-minded Jawaharlal Nehru JP was the mirror to 20th century India'<sup>5</sup>

Jayaprakash Narayan was, in varying degrees, dissatisfied or disenchanted not only with the People's Democracies under communist one-party systems and with some non-western varieties of guided or basic democracies, but also with liberal democracies of the West. His disillusionment with Marxism and Bolshevism followed, at the philosophical plane, from his questioning 'if good ends could ever be achieved by bad means'<sup>6</sup> and by his realization that 'materialism as a philosophical outlook could not provide any basis for ethical conduct and any incentive for goodness'<sup>7</sup>

He was driven in the same major direction by his observations, at a more practical plane, of actual distortions revealing the immense political and economic corruptibility of communism inherent in the unpredictability of revolutionary means (as the leader no longer remains in control of the revolutionary violence once let loose) and in the authoritarian one-party system. It offers State capitalism as a poor substitute for socialism made worse under the dictatorship of a new class of bureaucratic rulers

4 See his *A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity* (Wardha Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1959) and *Swaraj for the People* (Varanasi Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh, n.d. but preface date 1961)

See also Marguerite J. Fisher, 'New Concepts of Democracy in Southern Asia', *Western Political Quarterly* (Salt Lake City, Utah), XV-4 (December 1962) pp. 625-640

5 Girilal Jain, 'Mirror to Modern India JP the Romantic Revolutionary', *Times of India* (New Delhi) October 9, 1979, p. 8

6 *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, p. 22

7 *Ibid*, p. 27

All this led JP to the conclusion '(a) that in a society where it was possible for the people by democratic means to bring about social change it would be counter-revolutionary to resort to violence, and (b) that socialism could not exist, nor be created, in the absence of democratic freedoms'<sup>8</sup>

Jayaprakash Narayan sympathised with attempts of some Third World leaders, following the post-war rapid collapse of Western-type democratic regimes, to experiment with new concepts of democracy presumably rooted more firmly in indigenous traditions and contemporary realities 'The setting up of the National Union in the U A R and Basic Democracies in Pakistan', he wrote, 'is some little advance in the promised direction, but these countries are still far from being a democracy of any kind whatever'<sup>9</sup>

JP seems to be only less dissatisfied with the western democracies which seek to combine political liberalism with capitalist economy and the welfare State 'There is no doubt that the developed and mature democracies of the West are not so top heavy and devoid of the support of broad-based infrastructures of various kinds'<sup>10</sup> But as he sees it, the 'Western democracy is little more than government by consent' electorally obtained at one point in time and then in effect putting off popular participation until the next elections<sup>11</sup> Besides, European liberalism and socialism also fall short of 'a socialist democracy' In Britain, for instance, the 'Welfare State, which is constantly under conservative fire, is a poor substitute for socialism, and that too seems to be in the danger of being converted into the "opportunity State" of Mr Macmillan'<sup>12</sup>

Another twin trend in western democracies that disturbed him was private corporatization and governmental bureaucratization, both

leading to centralization 'With the growth of science and technology and a complex economic system, government is becoming more and more the business of smaller and smaller numbers of people. With the consequent growing concentration of economic and political power in the hands of fewer people — whether they are private citizens or officers of the State — democracy would soon be just a matter of form rather than of substance'<sup>13</sup>

The alternative offered by JP is *sarvodaya* — a communitarian utopia promising genuinely participative democracy and real socialism. Socially, *sarvodaya* is to be based not on an exclusive dominant class or group but on an all-inclusive egalitarian commune of citizens<sup>14</sup> Politically, it seeks to establish a truly decentralized democracy that goes beyond the democratic elitism of the West and ensures what JP calls 'Panchayat Raj' or *Swaraj* from below<sup>15</sup> Economically, *sarvodaya* envisages a thoroughly decentralized and voluntaristic economic order, going beyond State socialism and comprising, on the one hand, a network of many local and regional small-scale industries plus some large-scale central industries, and, on the other, a large number of communitarian farms collectively owned and managed by entire villages<sup>16</sup>

Structurally and territorially, the Panchayat Democracy under *sarvodaya* of JP's vision would take an organic institutional form in which the Gram or Nagar Sabha (village or town/mohalla assembly consisting of all adults therein) becomes the base from which spring two systems of government going up to higher levels. The first of these is a three-tier local self-government with the Gram Sabha indirectly and consensually electing the Panchayat Samitis (bloc assemblies) and the latter indirectly electing the Zila Parishads (district assemblies). The other set of legislative institutions

8 *Ibid*, p. 18

9 *Swaraj for the People*, p. 5

10 *Ibid*, p. 3

11 *Ibid*

12 *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, pp. 23-24

13 *Swaraj for the People*, p. 3

14 *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, pp. 39-41

15 *Swaraj for the People*, Chap. 2

16 *Ibid*, Chap. 3, and *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, pp. 38-39



stemming from the Gram/Nagar Sabha comprises the Vidhan Sabha (State assembly) and Lok Sabha (national parliament) which are to be elected through a three-step process

**I**n the first step, each Gram Sabha in a Vidhan Sabha or a Lok Sabha constituency (as the case may be) elects two delegates to a constituency electoral college called Electoral Council. The delegates are to be elected by a show of hands through repeated balloting and dropping at each ballot the candidate receiving the least vote in the previous ballot until only two names remain

In the second step, the Electoral Council is convened to select and set up candidates for the constituency concerned. The candidates receiving not less than a minimum specified percentage — say 30 per cent — of the Electoral Council votes should be designated candidates for direct mass election

In the final step the names of candidates selected by the Electoral Council is to be sent out to different Gram Sabhas within the constituency. Each Gram Sabha will then separately meet for directly electing the representative. The candidate carrying the majority of Gram Sabhas or, alternatively, the majority of aggregated Gram Sabha votes, is declared elected.<sup>17</sup> These governmental structures are to be based on 'a thoroughgoing system of political as well as economic decentralization'<sup>18</sup> that goes far beyond the 'federalism-with-a-strong-centre' philosophy of the Constituent Assembly and the Indian Constitution

17 *Swaraj for the People*, Chaps 2 and 4. This is a partially revised version of the scheme earlier presented in *A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity*, which had advocated a single hierarchical structure with each lower level electing the higher — i.e., the Gram Sabha — Panchayat Samiti — Zila Parishad — Vidhan Sabha — Lok Sabha. The revision was motivated by two main considerations: (1) to discourage parochialism and give the mass public a sense of direct participation in the highest level elections, and (2) to minimize chances of electoral corruption by moneyed interests under indirect system of election with small numbers of electors at each level except the lowest

18 *Swaraj for the People*, p 4

**T**here is little room for a political party system as well as for the State in the sarvodaya of JP's vision both work against the free exercise of freedom and sovereignty by the people — the parties by fragmenting the community and by imposing themselves on the masses, and the State by assuming the monopoly of political power (e.g., the bourgeois State), and by threatening to add to it the monopoly of economic power (e.g., the socialist State). Parties are welcome only in their more universalistic reincarnation as voluntary associational groups in the service of the people.<sup>19</sup> As for the State, JP writes 'I was, and am, not sure if the State would ever wither away completely. But I am sure it is one of the noblest goals of social endeavour to ensure that the power and functions and spheres of the State are reduced as far as possible.'<sup>20</sup>

JP's is thus a vision of a community of moral and civic citizens in active pursuit of 'self-government, self-management, mutual cooperation and sharing, equality, freedom, brotherhood'.<sup>21</sup> Voluntary action, having its roots in the society and individuals constituting it, looms larger in this reordering of the political system and overshadows the limited State and minimal government.

JP's greater reliance on *lokniti* (politics of people) and *lokshakti* (power of people) in preference to *rajniti* (power politics) and *rajshakti* (State power) can also be observed in his behaviour as a political and social leader. In 1942 he came forward to lead a spontaneous mass upsurge at a time when the entire top leadership of the Indian National Congress was in jail. In 1954, he cut off his life-long association

19 'I saw how people's rule became in effect party rule, how party rule in turn became the rule of a caucus or coterie, how democracy was reduced to mere casting of votes, how even this right of vote was restricted severely by powerful parties setting up their candidates from whom alone, for all practical purposes, the voters had to make their choice.' *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, pp 34-35. See also *Swaraj for the People*, Chaps 2 and 4

20 *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, p 37

21 *Ibid*, p 40

with party politics to join Acharya Vinoba Bhave's *bhoodan* (voluntary land donation for the landless) movement. In 1966-67 he stepped forward during the Bihar famine to lead the organization of a massive relief operation on a voluntaristic basis largely outside the usual governmental frameworks

**D**uring the Bihar Movement in the early and mid-1970s he gave his blessings and leadership to another mass upsurge on the issue of corruption and authoritarianism largely outside the framework of the established party system.<sup>22</sup> It was during this movement that he put forward his ideas on a Gandhian *sampurna kranti* (total revolution), and brought to the fore issues relating to fundamental reforms in the electoral, administrative, economic, social, political, and educational systems of the country with greater salience and urgency than ever since independence.<sup>23</sup>

JP came in this movement, nevertheless, to depend indirectly on pre-existing organizational networks in league with newer social and political forces within a framework of largely *ad hoc* inclusive structures such as *Lok Sangharsha Samiti* and *Chhatra-yuva Sangharsha Vahini*. Apart from non-party students and the intelligentsia and the nondescript masses contagiously drawn into it, the movement tended to draw structural sustenance mainly from a divided *sarvodaya* stream and the non-CPI opposition parties ranged against the ruling Congress.<sup>24</sup>

This aspect of the movement, coupled with the fact that it came

22 See John R. Wood, 'Extra-Parliamentary Opposition in India: An Analysis of Populist Agitations in Gujarat and Bihar' *Pacific Affairs*, Vol 48, No 3 (Fall 1975), pp 313-334; Ghanshyam Shah, *Protest Movements in Two Indian States: A Study of the Gujarat and Bihar Movements* (Delhi: Ajanta, 1977)

23 See Jayaprakash Narayan, *Total Revolution* (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1975), and Mahendra Prasad Singh, 'Jayaprakash Narayan on Parliamentary Democracy and Electoral Reforms in India', *Gandhi Marg* (New Delhi), Vol 1, No 12 (March 1980), pp 757-64

24 This aspect of the movement led Romesh Thapar in a contemporary review



to be intercepted by the proclamation of internal Emergency, did not allow a long enough political socialization to yield a sizeable corps of young political recruits to make their impact felt on the post-Emergency politics. Even in Bihar where an identifiable small band of young recruits got elected to the *Vidhan Sabha* in 1977 it was lost in the maize of factional politics in the Janata Party along the lines of the major constituent parties forming the Janata agglomerate as well as along caste lines. This party that the advocate of nonpartisan politics ironically fathered and fostered led the spectacular electoral landslide in 1977 and managed to govern in New Delhi for three years, but did not even survive the terminally ailing JP except as a rump.

Nevertheless, the ideological legacy to the nation bequeathed by him will certainly be more durable and powerful than any organizational legacy could perhaps have been. JP's creative experiments in Gandhian politics have indeed a meaning and a significance beyond India. As Nirmal Verma writes, 'In his endeavour to transcend the deceptions and the iron laws of history he made each of us aware of the innermost laws of our own being. This moral dimension elevated "Total Revolution" far above all the power-crazed revolutions of the 20th century. JP in his last days was like a poet-revolutionary who had at long last found a form, a content and a living voice for that restless dream which had never ceased to stir within him.'<sup>25</sup>

to remark that if it 'had insulated itself against the activists of the right who saw in it an ideal anti-Indira lever, then at least the way would have been clear for building a dynamic consensus around the core questions, a consensus cutting across party boundaries and ideologies. But an essentially Gandhian intervention from within the movement of protest to correct the aberrations and to remove the prevailing confusion in perspectives could once again create the possibility of a great cleansing'. Romesh Thapar, 'Salvaging the Passion', in T K Mahadevan (ed.), *Jayaprakash Narayan and the Future of Democracy*. (New Delhi and Madras: Affiliated East-West Press, 1975), p. 229-30

<sup>25</sup> Nirmal Verma, 'On Heroism in Our Time' (Translated from the Hindi by Suresh Sharma), *Seminar*, No. 245 (January 1980), p. 75.

### The Politics of Development Sugar Co-operatives in Rural Maharashtra B S BAVISKAR

The sugar industry, after textiles, is the largest processing industry in India, and in Maharashtra offers the most successful example of the growth of the co-operative movement. This work, based on an intensive field study of the Kisan Co-operative Sugar Factory in Maharashtra spread over several years, attempts to identify the factors which determine the success of a co-operative, to evaluate the nature of such success and its beneficiaries. Above all, it is an attempt to analyse the interrelationship between the co-operative movement and politics. Drawing on detailed evidence from the Kisan experience, the author argues, *inter alia*, that there is a dynamic relationship between development and politics. Inevitably the discussion ranges to fundamental questions about the nature and goals of the co-operative movement as a whole.

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# Books

**NATIONAL AND LEFT MOVEMENTS, IN INDIA** edited by K N Panikkar Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, 1980

AS a collection of articles on contemporary history and the history of the recent past, this book is evidently relevant. More so because the views represented differ widely. S Gopal on one end and E M S. Namboodiripad on the other *plus* a number of scholars of varying Marxist persuasions, *plus* a few others.

The issues and subjects are no less varying. militant forest-related movements, the Swadeshi movement, Nehru's ideology, the Indian capitalists' attitude towards the public sector, the Comintern's view of Indian development, and more, including some on the life and writings of K Damodaran. Reviewing all this within a unified framework is a hard task, risked by inadequacy of reporting an author, or a fallacy of composition.

The public sector can be a point to start with since it has implications for the character of State power, national movement and its leadership. The evaluation of the public sector has been fairly divergent: socialism-oriented, as Brezhnev called it, a state-capitalist underdevelopment variant of Keynesian mixed economy, or just a handmaid of a comprador bourgeoisie.

The Keynesian demand management model with

the State playing an adjusting role was accepted in the West sometime before the Bombay Plan. The Japanese experience was noted even earlier. In India, however, a relatively dominant State control and ownership of the means of production in some crucial sectors continued receiving compliments as an anti-monopoly instrument until the mid sixties when some economists analysed its essentially State-capitalist character. Aditya Mukherjee elaborates this point by his well-informed documentation of the process of intra-class conflict resolution — *within* the bourgeoisie and *between* the Congress Planning Committee led by Nehru and the bourgeoisie.

Was the bourgeoisie a comprador one even during the early twenties? Both S Bhattacharyya and Jairus Banaji assert it was not. Bhattacharyya presents his facts about the attitude of the Indian capitalist class towards the boycott movement and concludes, that 'the struggle against foreign capitalist domination and imperialist exploitation remained the overdetermining factor'.

The ideology of Jawaharlal Nehru is the next link in the chain, a much-debated agendum of the historian of modern India. Was Nehru a Marxist? A 'libertarian Marxist', says S Gopal, a combination of a 'half liberal half-Marxist'. Such a democratic arithmetic of an ideological dichotomy may be a way of expression, but the concept of a 'libertarian Marxist' is new. Gopal, of course, explains his argument, and one does not in any case assume in Gopal, a loyalty to Marxist concepts.



One is under a mandate to make such an assumption when it is Jairus Banaji, a frank Trotskyite. Banaji leaves his reader somewhat confused when he calls Nehru a 'left democratic Congress leader' having a greater understanding than the Comintern about the dialectics of the Indian national movement. Lenin's formulations about the national democratic movement led by the bourgeoisie seem to attach unambiguous meanings to 'left' and 'democratic'. Banaji neither explains nor permits the reader to assume Leninist meanings. Mukherjee calls Nehru a 'left nationalist', also without stating his concept of left. Surely the Marxist historians are aware that the precise meaning of these two have often raised much controversy within the communist movement!

Does 'left' or 'democratic' include anti-landlordism — at least pre-capitalist landlordism — as a necessary condition? What, in this connection, has been the role of the landlords, as a class, in the anti-imperialist movement? Or the Congress party's attitude towards them? The answer to the first question has been either too *general* in historical analysis so far, or only *theoretical* by way of asserting the essential complementarity of the interests of landlordism and imperialism.

The second one has been answered more precisely with a good deal of unanimity among historians. In his analysis of the militant forest-related movements, Sumit Sarkar makes the point. Gandhian nationalism 'made little effort to integrate poor peasant and tribal militancy into its mainstream'. Bipan Chandra says, 'the national leadership on the whole curbed the anti-landlord struggle' since the landlords 'were to be kept in the national movement'.

Peasant movement is the next issue. The agrarian situation in all its aspects and complexities must form the basis for any study of a peasant movement. But no other area evokes such a wide variety of opinions. The perception of no other area, perhaps, continues to be so hazy.

• K. Sheshadri's narrative and assessment of the Telengana struggle appears nearer to the CPI's position that the struggle should have been withdrawn on the entry of the Indian army, as opposed to Sheshadri's view of the CPI(M)'s position that 'the struggle was alright but it should be a partial struggle to defend the gains of the peasantry'. Sheshadri, surprisingly, does not refer to P. Sundaraya's book on the subject which deals with the debate at length.

D. N. Dhanagare argues that prior to 1940, the communists did very little to organize the peasantry and from 1925 to 1938, the class base of the peasant parties 'comprised predominantly of the middle peasants, *rich and well-to-do farmers* and substantial tenants'. Even after 1940, 'defining agrarian classes and priorities in different regions of India' continued to be the major source of ideological confusion among the communists.

Even 'the left dared not attack the rich peasant', says Bipan Chandra, 'but either tilted at the windmills of feudalism, or wanted to attack the rich peasant by calling him a semi-feudal landlord'. The failure to act correctly was obviously not unrelated to the failure to understand 'Land reform' only strengthened capitalism in agriculture. 'If anything, it is the *rich, middle, and small peasants* who have gained at the cost of the very big landowners'.

It is a fact of history that the communist movement could not encompass the peasantry in a big way except in Andhra Pradesh, Bengal and Kerala. But the failure to unify the peasant movement with the national movement is not as true about Kerala as perhaps it is about Bengal. Ascribing this merely to the objective class position of the leaders or other communist functionaries, as Dhanagare does implicitly, can provide at best a partial answer. The leadership of all revolutionary movements in the modern period has come from outside the peasantry or the working class, at least in the formative stages.

About a correct understanding of the class relations and the attendant modes of exploitation in agriculture, the historian must go beyond generalisations and scrutinise the *specifics*. For, political practice demands a constant linkage between the general and the specific. It is here that the terms as concepts become unavoidably important. Dhanagare uses Marxist terms in classifying the peasantry, and lists middle peasants, 'rich and well-to-do farmers' and 'substantial tenants', all in the same breath. Are 'farmers' and 'peasants' interchangeable terms? If so, how to demarcate between the rich and the well-to-do? What is the distinction between a tenant and a peasant, substantial or otherwise?

Bipan Chandra's argument (a) that the rich, middle, and small peasants have *all* gained at the cost of the very big landowners; (b) that 'deepening of capitalism has created wider employment opportunities'; (c) that 'tenancy is more difficult to fight'; and (d) that the landlords 'were forced generally to change their class status', appears too bold, due to, among other reasons, inadequacy of substantiating analysis. There is no all-India average holding-size corresponding to each class of peasants. Landholding data alone is, therefore, a highly deceptive basis for classification.

Leave alone the theoretical question, how does one, for example, explain that the 'rich peasant confronts the proletarian and semiproletarian elements and does so with the support of the middle, even small peasant'? By the practice of usury? By low agricultural wages? By maximising of profit from capitalist agriculture through high output prices? Or all these together? How much surplus does a middle or small peasant have? How much wage labour does the middle peasant, or the small peasant, employ? If there is a new empirical foundation of Bipan Chandra's classification of the peasantry, then



that needs to be stated for investigating the specifics without which the classification remains at best a notional one. Or else, the terms should be explicitly analysed.

Specifics after all, are not in the least expendable in political practice. That, of course, does not mean that practice is a sacred cow. P C Joshi complains that 'Indian Marxism has been more derivative than original, more theological than scientific, more assertive than receptive'. The literature of self-criticism of the organised communist movement is not altogether devoid of such points though put in a different way. Evidently, long period of practise notwithstanding, major failures have taken place.

Are the Marxist scholars any better? Some exceptions apart, they tend to make too broad generalisations that are often impermissibly abstract. Cumulatively, these generalisations also produce stereotypes that defy all application. For a more dependable understanding, one has to ultimately fall back upon the writings of the party leaders. On the national question, for example, E M S Namboodiripad's still remains the only work so far. The writings of the Kisan Sabha leaders on the agrarian situation are still much more educating despite their lack of the rigours of a hard researcher.

The articles in the book by E M S and G. Adhikary are additional examples. E M S clearly sums up the evolution of the national movement and the conflicts within the national or the left movement when he says that the 'two paths traversed by the two of us (he and Damodaran) in our transition from Gandhism to communism are illustrative of the two major streams which constitute India's left movement'. Amalendu De's 'Formation of Communist Party in Faridpur' is a highly rewarding store of information proving or disproving some points made in other articles about the peasant movement. Adhikary's is a faithful resume of Damodaran's philosophical works.

In sum, the book is a useful addition to the written history of national and left movements. Panikkar, as editor, could have, at least mentioned the dates of first publication of related articles by the authors, and added a bibliography. But that does not affect the compliment he deserves.

Kumares Chakravarty

**THE PURSUIT OF EQUALITY IN AMERICAN HISTORY** by J R Pole. Ludhiana and New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers, 1978

*THE Pursuit of Equality in American History* is an Indian reprint of the 1978 American release of the book mainly based on the British historian, J R Pole's, Jefferson Memorial Lectures at the University of California at Berkeley in 1971. It is a historical analysis of the evolution of the abstraction and practical policy implications of the ideal of equality

in the federal and pluralist America. Although its historical style and the Americanist focus and content may appear rather heavy to a non-specialist, it also offers enough implicit comparative points of interest to students of contemporary Indian politics.

Pole surveys the evolution of the idea of equality through the various social and political intervals of American history right from the colonial beginnings. In his own words 'The idea of equality thus revealed over the two hundred years of the nation's independent existence a tenacity which afforded a peculiar kind of glamour to American claims and pretensions, and a kind of justification to the offer — or threat — of social justice which America had always seemed to hold out to the common people in face of the empires, monarchies, priesthoods, and social hierarchies of the Old World' (p. 3).

This tenacity of egalitarianism was, to a great deal, the product of (1) the revolutionary but constitutional origins of the American nation, (2) a pluralist social structure bereft of an established aristocratic stratum in a nation of immigrants, (3) an 'open' frontier gradually shifting westward from the early settlements of European immigrants on the Atlantic seaboard towards the Pacific coast, and (4) a federal constitutional set-up. The revolutionary origins of the nation allowed the egalitarian rhetoric to creep into the language of justice in a more explicit form than in most contemporaneous political systems, while the constitutional nature of the resultant regime precluded the danger of terminating the quest of equality by having deemed it 'achieved' through an authoritarian or totalitarian fiat.

The absence of an established aristocracy facilitated the pursuit of equality in the new nation, but the presence of racial cleavage in the social structure put seemingly insurmountable barriers in its way. Even the basic political component of racial equality had to pass through a long and tortuous journey, the principal landmarks of which happened to be the making of federal and State constitutions after the revolution, revision of State constitutions in new conventions, the Reconstruction debates following the civil war which produced both the Fourteenth and the Fifteenth Amendments, all-white Democratic Party primaries in the Southern one-party dominant states by excluding Negroes from membership of the ruling party (a policy sustained by the Supreme Court in *Grovey v Townsend* in 1935 but struck down implicitly in *US v Classic* in 1941 and explicitly in the *Smith v. Allwright* in 1944); the federal Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960 and the Voting Right Act of 1965, and a series of court judgements during the 1960s.

A distinctive feature of the American quest for equality has been the maintenance of a balance between the equality of individual opportunity and cultural and structural pluralism. The pursuit of the former has not been as successful as one would ideally expect, but a situation has arisen under which





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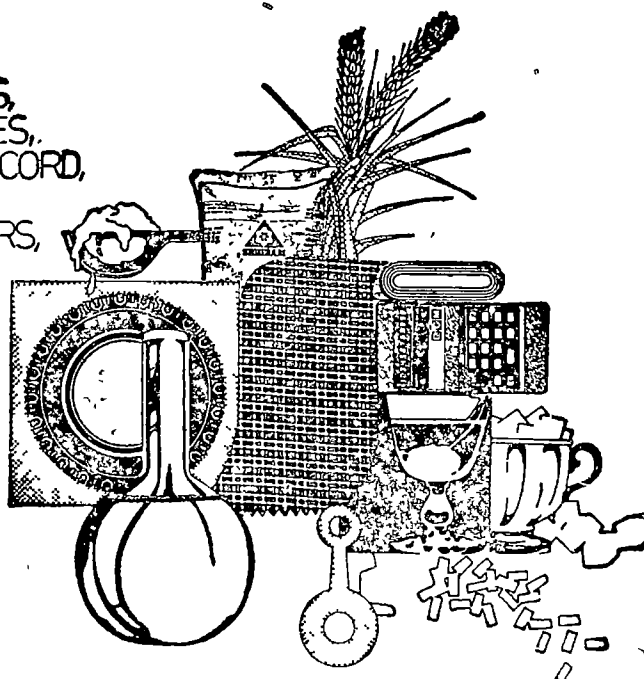
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'parallel columns might rise to considerable heights without mutual interference and with a minimum of mutual exchange' (p 248)

Pole rightly points out. 'Instead of one melting pot at least three appear to have emerged. They are defined as Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish. But many of their members are secular in opinion and almost interchangeable in style, not to mention personal appearance. The pluralism that may survive as a sociological fact in these conditions could not claim the protection of constitutional law' (p 249). There has also emerged, moreover, a marginal class of intellectuals and artists emancipated from the constraints of their backgrounds.

The 'open' frontier imparted to the American mind a peculiar 'frontier spirit'. This sense of geographical spaciousness has lent an unusual measure of accommodative and bargaining political culture to American pluralism. The formal declaration of the end of the 'open' frontier by the 1980 census did have some impact on this spirit. And this impact was indeed felt 'less significantly demographically than psychologically, it removed an imagined "open" frontier of development and served as a sharp reminder that the United States must accommodate itself to the same kinds of geographical limitations as other countries' (p 225). The perception had, in fact, preceded facts and it led to a revision in the immigration policy and accentuated anxieties about the problem of assimilation.

Federalism initially provided cloistered citadels of inequalities in the South immune from the winds of change, but later served to put these same citadels under overwhelming assault from the commanding heights of the polity controlled by the federal government. An articulated concern with equality, it is true, was much more pronounced during the earlier Progressive era than during the New Deal, which was, in fact, more concerned with recovery from the economic depression of the early 1930s. But the contribution of the New Deal was to make the federal government a permanent instrument of social policy, which, given the commitment of the Roosevelt Administration to the interests of the underprivileged and the minorities, raised the hope that one day the power acquired by the federal government in the realm of social policy might be available not only for recovery but also for promoting equality.

An enormous increase in the rights — and obligations — of the federal government in the realm of individual rights, following tentative steps by the Eisenhower Administration and more vigorous ones by the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, resulted in an extension of the concept of the government's obligation to promote equality along several dimensions. (1) equalitarian laws confined only to northern states became national through federal laws, (2) the general principle of equality in education and employment opportunity as fundamental tenet of constitutional law got extended to

virtually all areas ranging from civil rights to housing, public accommodation, and entertainment, and (3) instead of right of aggrieved individuals being sought in the courts, permanent agencies of the government were established for the purpose which 'institutionalized the new parameters of political obligations' (p 263).

A distinctive American characteristic of the pursuit of equality compared to its pursuit in Europe, has been the absence in the former of militant, narrowly class-based, political parties so typically present in the latter. This is a glaring contrast which Pole in a general sort of way hints at but never brings under sharp analytical focus which may somewhat disappoint students of comparative politics. Even comparative historians might have expected something more than the very diffused treatment of this theme from a British historian looking across the Atlantic. This seems to be a missed opportunity of theoretically interesting and empirically valid comparisons, as the polities and sub-polities of the Atlantic region are sufficiently similar to justify comparison and sufficiently dissimilar in terms of some variables to bring out causal relationships. And, judging from the broad sweep of the materials covered in the book — ranging from the history of ideas, policies and laws, social and cultural factors, and social science researches bearing on equality — the demand of comparison here being voiced appears neither unreasonable nor beyond the writer's competence.

**Mahendra Prasad Singh**

**PEASANTS IN HISTORY — Essays in Honour**  
**of Daniel Thorner** edited by E J Hobsbawm, W  
Kula, Ashok Mitra, K N Raj, Ignacy Sachs  
Oxford University Press, 1980

THE late Daniel Thorner was an agrarian democrat, always under the influence of Kuznets rather than of Marx, who caused two minor sensations among his many academic friends in India, especially the economists, in the last years of his life. One of them was his strenuous attempt, starting in the early 1960s, to rehabilitate A V Chayanov's concept of 'peasant economy', which, as is correctly noted in a contribution in the present volume (p 222) 'is opposed to the Marxist concept of class differentiation among the peasantry'. This was followed up by Daniel Thorner's own version of the concept of a peasant economy, to which the best introduction available is his *Peasant Economy as a Category in Economic History* (1962), made available in English translation in *Peasants and Peasant Societies*, edited by Teodor Shanin, since 1971.

In the present volume, a little surprisingly, there is hardly any recognition of the *differences* between the Chayanov and Thorner versions, and no contribution devoted to the Thorner version, though there is a very full critique of the Chayanov version (pp. 221-48). The second was his rather dramatic an-



nouncement in the late 1960s that a 'capitalist revolution' had broken out in Indian agriculture, which had ended 'the complex of legal, economic and social relations (which are) uniquely typical of the Indian countryside' and which had acted as a 'built-in depressor'

Several contributions in the present volume argue, explicitly or implicitly, that Chayanov's concept of a 'peasant economy' has no relevance to Indian conditions — past or present. Of course, the explicit critique, already referred to above, is with reference to Indonesia (by Svein Aass). But the contributions by Andre Beteille and by K. N. 'Raj' seem to make the same point with reference to India. This does not necessarily mean that the contributors are 'repudiating' Daniel Thorner, for Thorner himself seems to have conceded that Chayanov's thesis was valid only in under-populated regions like Russia. The interesting question really is whether Thorner's own distinct version of the 'peasant economy', or some other version of the 'peasant economy', other than Chayanov's or Thorner's, is a valid hypothesis for 'over-populated' regions such as India or Indonesia. Not only the 'empirical' studies limited to Indian data, e.g., Beteille's and Raj's, but the most comprehensive comments on this point at the level of theory (by Eric Hobsbawm) in this volume, seem to say no to this question.

Nonetheless, the noise Thorner made about the need for a theory of the peasant economy which gives adequate recognition to the role of the peasantry, has produced two lasting results. First, it has made some of his admirers (e.g., Louis Dumont, pp 271-81) grapple with the problem that for classical economic theory 'Land ownership represented . . . the intrusion into the economy of an *extraneous* (reviewer's italics) fact' (p 281), and that even Marx's attempt to assimilate landed property via his theory of 'absolute rent' runs into difficulties (p 280). Eric Hobsbawm, quoting Polanyi, makes the same point (p 11) with reference to the theory on which the proposals of the Scottish reformers of the eighteenth century was based. Second, it has had the somewhat paradoxical effect of extensive work being done, at the theoretical as well as the empirical level, on the Marxian theory of differentiation and class contradictions among the peasantry in late feudalism (in Europe) and capitalism (whether in Europe or in the so-called 'third world'). (The outcome is paradoxical because Chayanov, and perhaps also Thorner, wanted to turn attention away from such studies). Contributions in the present volume by Eric Hobsbawm, Witold Kula, Teodor Shanin, Svein Aass are mainly contributions to such Marxian discussions, which focus on the dynamics or the dialectics of the break-up of the peasantry. So does a contribution by Jacques Pouchepadass on 'Peasant Classes in Twentieth Century Agrarian Movements in India' (pp 136-55).

What about the 'second sensation' caused by Thorner, viz., about a capitalist revolution in the late 1960s in Indian agriculture? Two contributions,

one by Elizabeth Whitcombe on the Zamindars of U.P., and the other one by V. S. Vyas (pp 181-93) seem to over-endorse the thesis (Vyas seems to over-endorse the thesis by suggesting — *without* convincing empirical data, on his own admission (p 187) — that the landless labourers have been gaining at the expense of the big and medium landowners (p 191) and that the 'small and marginal farmers' have been 'holding their own' (p 192)).

On the other hand, Erich Jacoby, in a piece entitled 'Has Land Reform Become Obsolete?' is discreetly reproachful about Thorner's looking with 'some sympathy on the new forms of capitalist farming in India' in his last years (p 297). He asserts (citing Israeli studies) that 'under equal production conditions collective and individual farming have on the average the same results' (p 305). (This conclusion is not really negated in Basile Kerblay's 'Peasant Family Economy in the USSR Today' (pp 69-82), which suggests that an integrated co-habitation between the Soviet collective farms and the collective farmers' family plots establishes good conditions for the development of agriculture (p 79)).

On the other hand, Moshe Lewin in his 'The Kolkhoz and the Russian Muzhik' (pp 55-68) reaches the *opposite* conclusion. According to him, the coercive 'imposing' of the collective farm on the Russian peasant by an industrialising bureaucracy, linked with the private plot of the collective farmer as a 'crucial economic sector', 'froze' the Russian muzhik 'in an earlier stage, if they did not actually move backwards' (p 63). Indeed, according to him, what was 'reproduced was the backward Russian muzhik, instead of the modern co-operative industrial farmers .. (who) might have become more interested in private property and private farming than ever before' (p 65). But the empirical evidence on which Kerblay bases himself is more extensive and more convincing than Lewin's skating on rather thin statistical ice.

Of the 18 pieces in this volume, all except 4 have been referred to above. Of these 4, 'Energy and the Village' by Ignacy Sachs (pp 259-70) is interesting because it has an appendix on a proposal for a village-level public utility. But as Sachs points out, it is hard to see how 'present land tenure patterns and relations of production outside the communal plot (proposed)' will allow the scheme to work, nor how far 'built-in guarantees against the control of the village utility by the local elite' can be evolved (p 265). Charles Bettelheim's 'The People's Commune' of Ma Lo (as it was in September 1975) (pp 248-55) does not, unfortunately, make clear (on p 252) exactly *how* 'work points' are attributed to members of the commune.

Off the main track of the discussion in this volume is Bert F. Hoselitz's somewhat dated paper on 'Economic Growth: Income or Welfare?' It is the only paper in the true Kuznets spirit, and strikes a jarring note by claiming that indexes of 'general per capita welfare' are likely to come into



use in the next twenty or thirty years (p 293) He brushes aside the difficulties posed by the need to measure or order differences in 'political, socio-structural, cultural and ideological factors' in constructing such an index hoping that increasing 'acceptance of western values in less advanced countries' will facilitate the task (pp 293-94)

It is doubtful whether any other contributor to this volume would agree A K Sen's paper on famine mortality (in the Bengal famine of 1943) establishes that an estimate of 'around 3 million would be nearer the mark than the figure of 1.5 million' (p 213), but, regrettably, is unable to throw much light on the 'occupational pattern of mortality' due to lack of adequate data (pp 215-16) It is a good example of being careful about distinguishing between 'hard' and 'soft' (impressionistic) facts in economic history, even if the former are less interesting than the latter

Arun Bose

#### **THE PATRON AND THE PANCA** by Bengt-

Erik Borgstrom Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, Sahibabad, 1980

THE author, a Swedish scholar, conducted during 1971-73 a survey of the panchayat system in Nepal His unit of study was the Kitini panchayat of Lalitpur district in the southern part of the Kathmandu Valley The findings of the author are significant though they are largely the result of his impressionistic views on several matters Quantification of certain issues dealt with in the book could not take place and, at times, the conclusions drawn seem to be provocative at least for those who espouse the cause of the partyless Panchayat system in Nepal The author uses the word 'pancayat' to refer to 'Panchayat' and hence, the word 'Panca' would mean a member of the panchayat

Nepal has many ethnic groups with different traditions, cultures and languages, spread over a wide area, separated from each other by mountains which are extremely difficult to cross One important function of the State is to keep all of them together so that divisive forces do not exist in the country Nepal, a Hindu kingdom, has Buddhists who form the bulk of the rest of the population and they have not been relegated to any inferior position Similarly, while Nepal is a theocratic State, it retains all the elements of secularism

The village panchayat in Nepal is seen as the epitome of democracy in which the whole village comes together and solves its problems in an atmosphere of unity and harmony The author likens it to the Gandhian vision of the self-sufficient village community Panchayats were established for social development when parliamentary democracy was abolished by the King Panchayat democracy is said to be in explicit contrast to parliamentary institutions and is suited to the particular character of the Nepali people as the best avenue for their

self-expression Panchayat democracy has been described as a system uniquely tailored to the Nepalese tradition and it envisages the working together of all individuals in the country without regard to caste, creed or colour It is stated that every individual should enjoy the right to economic prosperity and that no one should have to fear exploitation by others

The author observes that there is no serious consideration of how progress in the field of social justice is to be achieved without changing the given structure of social relations 'Instead of discussing the possibility that transformation may be impeded by vested interests at the various levels (local, district nation) or facing the fact that desire for change on the part of some may be prevented from materialising in the existing form of society, official ideology makes it a matter of "rallying the forces of development" or "unleashing the forces of development," as if unity among the different segments of the population was a kind of spell that would magically bring forth and activate something called "the forces of development"'

One conclusion drawn is that if there have been few changes in economic relations between the various strata and groups within the country, the sources of capital available to the government have certainly changed with the massive influx of foreign aid and loans The point stressed is that while capitalisation of the economy creates new economic categories and classes which make their demands on the government, the flow of foreign capital is distributed by the elite and hence has very little effect in reshaping economic relations In other words, aid money does not in itself play a dynamic role in the transformation of social relations in a country When it comes to concrete results of economic progress in consonance with panchayat democracy, the examples given are invariably of some development projects which have been completed 'These are, of course, important enough, but a new air strip or the building of a new school do not suggest how inequalities between various castes and classes of people are to be eradicated In this way, the ideals of freedom from exploitation are being constantly confused with specific achievements in the field of economic planning'

Panchayat democracy, according to the author, has no real potential to transform the diffuse ideals into reality, it seems to rely on a 'magical' belief in some sort of transforming capacity inherent in economic growth itself He feels that this is unlikely to happen if Nepal is to depend on foreign capital which will be distributed from above There is no discernable movement resulting from economic changes emanating from below, which could transform people's lives and the way in which they view the world and make the hitherto dependent strata of the population self-sufficient and self-reliant in the ways envisaged by panchayat democracy

Navin Chandra Joshi



# Communication

DIPANKAR GUPTA resurrects C. Wright Mills' plea for a 'sociological imagination' in his article in Seminar 254. He counterposes Mills' formulation against Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's concept of the 'social construction of reality'. Gupta argues that men are 'fundamentally equal' and that sociology should be a 'leveller,' a 'humanizer', yet, he finds that all too often sociologists perform 'aimless' studies of culture which emphasize diversity in a 'typified' manner and serve to divide human beings.

Gupta's plea is a well-articulated rendition of a reasonably familiar theme: that Indian sociology, and sociology in general, is not relevant or creative or courageous, but, in his words, 'nerveless'. Why, he asks, is there so little relevant work on the important phenomena of communalism, chauvinism and racism? Is he suggesting that nothing has been done because the subjects are too delicate? Or does he mean that what exists is not very penetrating? What are these studies which are so 'nerveless'? Gupta's plea is a reasonable one: one only wishes he might go one step further and articulate some specific strategies by which Indian sociology might move away from its 'nerveless' stance or some particular aspects of, say, Indian society which ought to be studied from his 'historical and relational' perspective.

Gupta's use of two conceptual schemes, which are familiar but rarely juxtaposed, in a 'demystified' manner, is both perceptive and constructive. He decries the use of sociology as an exacerbator of what Berger and Luckmann call man's natural tendency toward 'typification' in order to understand their social reality. This view, he contends, 'denies a universal view of humanity and orders it instead into categories that become more rigid and unyielding as the life situation of one section of mankind gets more distanced from the other'. He counters this view with Mills' 'sociological imagination' as a combative approach struggling for the fundamental equality of man. Much theory is mere schema and unless its underlying meaning is made clear, it remains irrelevant. Gupta has managed to render these concepts useful.

But is Gupta right? Are men fundamentally equal, but rendered unequal by the artificial categorizing, classifying and typifying done by the popular imagination and codified by social scientists? If so, can sociologists help to diminish divisiveness by 'demystifying' the historical causes behind diversity?

Gupta urges that sociologists, taken in the broadest sense to be 'students of society,' ought to be as unbound as possible by their own horizons and broad in formulating 'overlapping' questions for investigation. He is concerned lest sociologists become so 'culturologically entranced' that they neglect to study the historical causality behind human diversity. 'Every man' creates popular 'constructions of reality,' but he does not seek to go beyond them to theorize about them. That is the sociologist's task. The sociologist is thus called upon to combat man's fundamental style of viewing the world with a more imaginative approach. But can sociologists really hope to transform this fundamental equality of man as a paradigm into a 'functional typification' when men perceive their diversity rather than their unanimity? What is real to most people, as Gupta admits, is not their commonness with others but their differences.

It is, one hopes, a truism to state that sociology ought to be more than a 'gracious pastime with impeccable table manners'. It ought definitely strive to provide a 'universalizing,' 'humanizing' perspective, perhaps through an 'historical' approach to the 'social construction of reality'. Yet, it seems overly optimistic to hope that, even with Mills' combative imaginative sociology, one can solve such 'sharp ascriptive formulations' as communalism, chauvinism and racism merely by 'punching holes in them,' as Gupta might wish.

Furthermore, Gupta's plea for a 'sociological imagination again' is different from arguing that sociology should abandon its 'nerveless' stance. He seems to suggest that the current paradigm is itself the outgrowth of historical and biographical confrontations, yet, he blames sociologists for being unwilling to plunge in. Is the 'nerveless' stance unconscious or intentional? If the former, then articles like Gupta's are useful because they 'demystify,' they enlighten people. If the latter, then no amount of clever prose will effect a significant change.

In the final analysis, then, Dipankar Gupta's plea must be seen as admirable but utopian and his clarifications as helpful but not definitive. Communalism may indeed be a stronger force than sociology.

**Gretchen Bloom**

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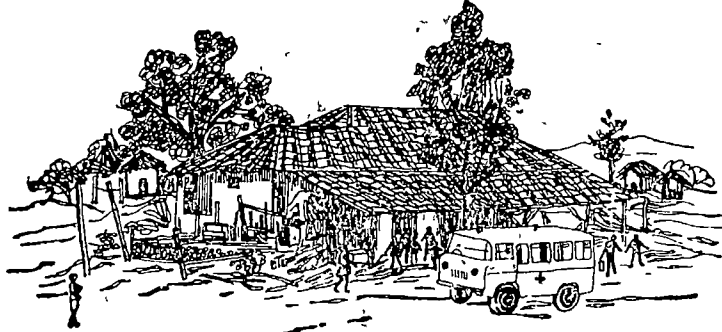


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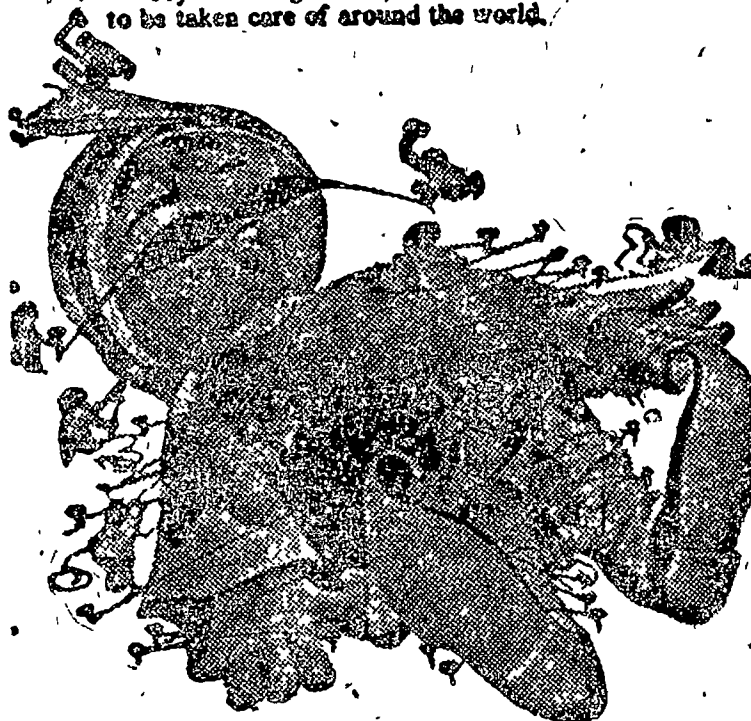
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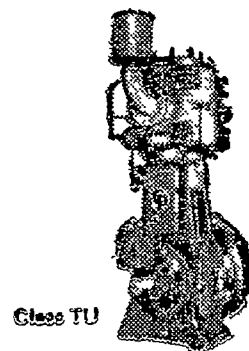
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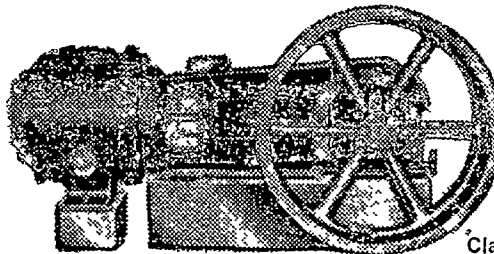
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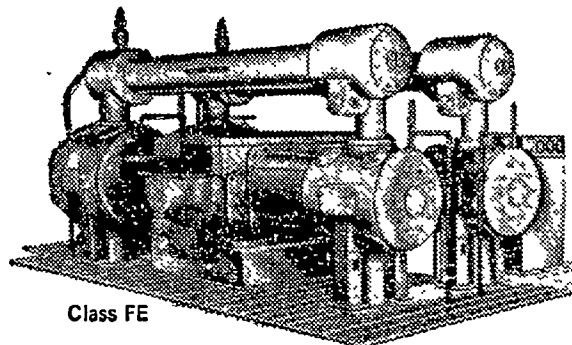
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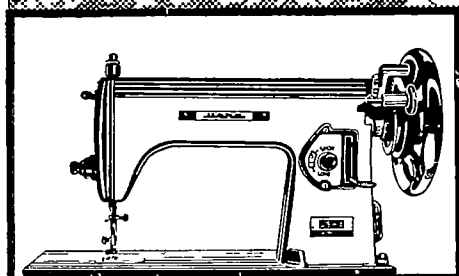
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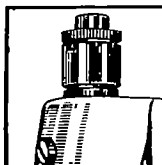
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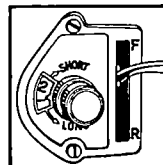
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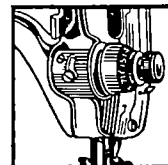
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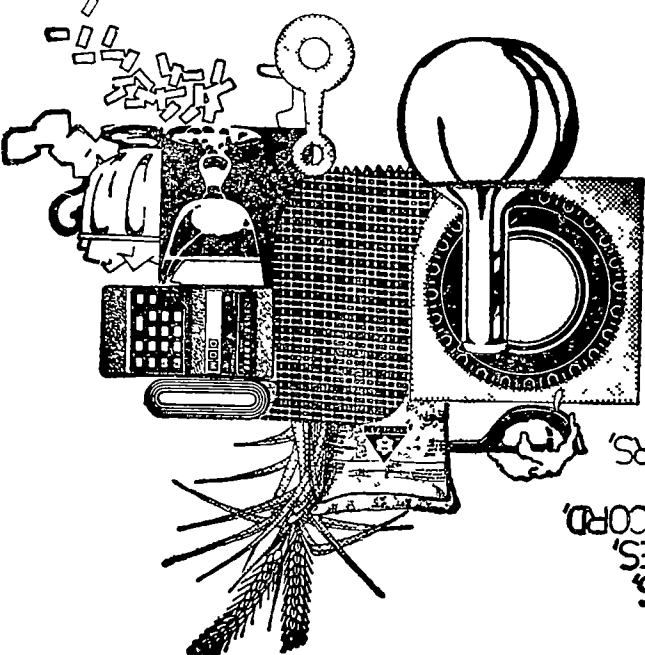
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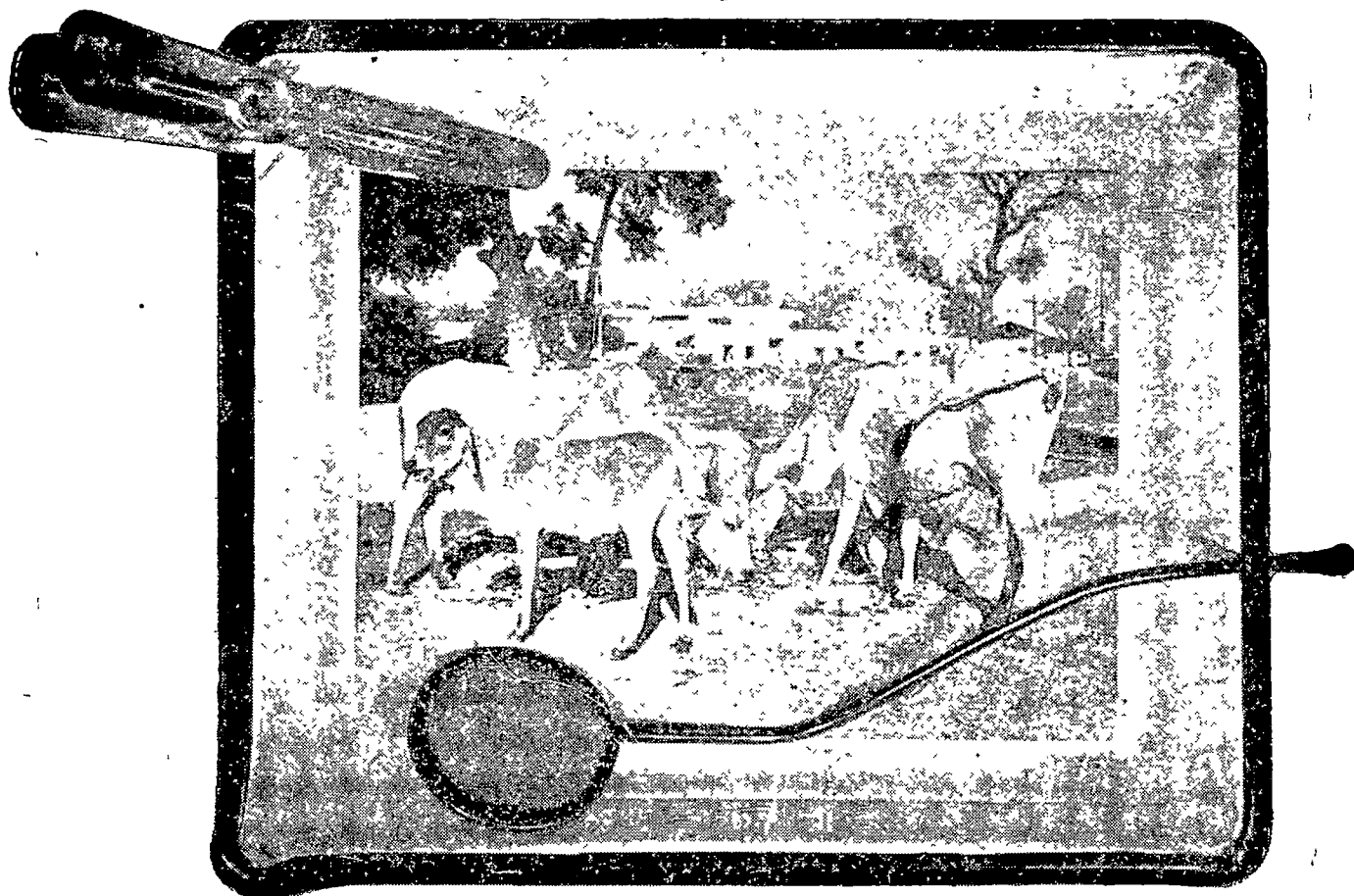
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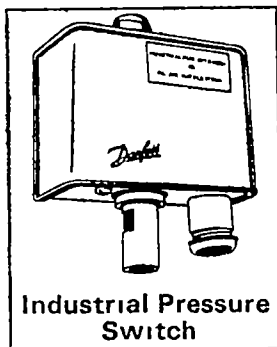
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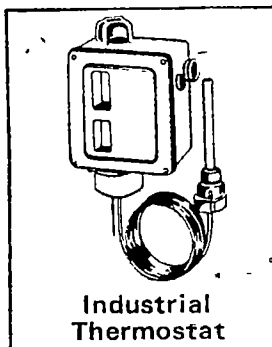


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Publisher/ROMESH THAPAR

Managing Editor/RAJ THAPAR

Production/TEJBJR SINGH

Circulation/C B KUMAR

Published from Malhotra Building, Janpath, New Delhi-1 Telephone 46534 Cable Address Seminar New Delhi Single copy. Free; 85 cents (\$) Yearly Rs 30, £ 4, \$ 10 Three Year Rs 75, £ 10, \$ 25. Reproduction of material prohibited unless permitted.

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## Foreign Policy Alternatives

a symposium on  
possible scenarios  
in external relations

symposium participants

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Designed by Dilip Chowdhury Associates



# The problem

**EVERY** now and then it becomes necessary for a nation to review and reassess the policy frame it has fashioned for itself. This is particularly so in the realm of external relations which tend to take on a somewhat rigid or unchanging posture despite the growing mutations in the international system. India is very much a striking example of a nation which has paralysed itself, internally and externally.

While it is true that there can be no real restructuring of a foreign policy without internal stability and coherence, it is necessary to begin a search for alternative scenarios in a changing world or a world in which many postulates no longer hold. Foreign policies are normally designed to be above political controversy and to reflect the best interests of the nation. This fact alone demands deeper probing of realities and a testing of new concepts and options.



**This issue of SEMINAR confronts our foreign policy frontally as something which has lost its original moorings and is now moving into areas of unrewarding submission and compromise. Global changes are seen as giving us a chance to carry out corrections without damaging repercussions. And the fear is ever-present that we may allow opportunist short-term gains to damage irreparably our permanent larger interests.**

**If this issue is able to spark thoughts on the kind of infrastructures of research, analysis and policy formulation we need in the complex international scene into which we are now projected, then it will have served more than its original purpose. The issues raised here are of vital concern and can no longer be shelved because our political leadership imagines that it lacks the time and even the energy to apply itself to hard problems.**



# Civilizational concerns

GIRI DESHINGKAR

FOREIGN policy analysis has far too long been left to specialists of international power politics and strategic thinking. It is necessary to think beyond the confines and straitjackets of such specialists. For, the foreign policy of a country is an expression of its fundamental self-identity as a civilization at a given point of its history. There are different ways of defining such an identity. Before we come to the details of our political and geopolitical development since Independence, we should like to pose these larger issues. Only then can a detailed analysis of the present crisis in our international relations be put in a proper perspective.

The most familiar and on the whole accepted mode of defining India's self-identity can be found in these statements of the present Prime Minister: 'We want to make India strong', 'The foreign powers are constantly conspiring to weaken and even destroy India', 'We do not know what combination of enemies we may have to face'. These interconnected themes cannot be said to be the personal ideosyncracies of Indira Gandhi. A very large proportion of those who think

about foreign affairs in India seem to agree with her although they would differ among themselves about who exactly the foreigners are.

Why should India 'become strong'? And why should the foreign powers, whoever they are, want to weaken India? The answers to these questions can give us a clue to our own aspirations vis-à-vis the rest of the world as well as our perception of that external world. It is important to note that what is being talked about is the strength of the country, not the prosperity of its people, the justness of the social system or the cultural potentialities of the Indian civilization. The strength is always talked about in an external context. And the threats that are perceived are in the form of some presumed military aggression, attempts at political 'destabilization', the weakening of national unity, economic pressures and the like.

So, our perception of the external world, particularly that of the great powers and of some of our neighbours (chiefly Pakistan) is that they are out to 'get' us. As for our smaller neighbours, we believe they



are always willing to play the game of the great powers out of sheer cussedness. It is a dirty world, we tell ourselves, and one must stand up to it.

This is *realpolitik*, a part of the package of nation-statehood which we adopted with Independence thirty-three years ago. We seem to have patterned ourselves on European nationalism, the only difference being that whereas European nationalism had a strong cultural foundation, ours has none. Here in fact culture is considered an impediment in the way of the nation, something to be cheerfully sacrificed at the altar of modernity and great power status. And we seem to practise *realpolitik* both domestically and externally.

**W**e can go on playing the game of *realpolitik* for as long as we like. We may even make a 'success' of it. We have a large territory, a very large population, a reasonable cache of resources and the technical capacity and skills to blend all these into strength. But should we be playing the game at all?

It is interesting to note here that according to the classical theory of foreign policy behaviour, the external policy of a country is an extension of its domestic policy. But, in the case of India, as in the case of many other ex-colonial societies, it seems to be the exact opposite. It is goals vis-a-vis other States, viz., a strong centre, a strong army, a strong unified economy, precise borders, one 'national' language and national prestige that dictate our domestic policy. Our perception of India's role in the world, therefore, becomes crucial for our well-being at home.

India, we occasionally need to remind ourselves, is not just one nation-State among others, it is the core area of a civilization. It may be that we are required to function as a nation-State. We may also be required to play the game of *realpolitik*. But is that the sum-total of our existence? Do 'national interests' exhaust our meaning system? Do the national interests to which we are always asked to subordinate everything else promote the development of our civilization? If there

is a conflict between civilizational and national goals, which goals should take precedence?

The answers to these questions, admittedly, do not provide a prescription for the conduct of every day foreign policy. But they provide the underpinnings of major policy choices. For example, *realpolitik* is based on a theory of human nature according to which all human beings or their aggregates seek to maximize their advantage vis-a-vis others, they are all supposed to be involved in a zero-sum game. This theory, like any other theory of human nature, is of course irrefutable, it can neither be proved nor disproved. Its acceptance or rejection is not self-evident in the sense of being 'scientifically' compelling, it is a matter of choice. The choice, for human aggregates, should be made by the totality of culture of that aggregate, in short by a fundamental civilizational quest. This is the great historical legacy of this great land. Let us not sacrifice it at the altar of some passing craze for status and power in a fast changing and highly uncertain world.

**T**he question, therefore, is whether by accepting *realpolitik* as the norm for conducting our foreign policy we are reinforcing our civilizational preference or contravening it. A related question is whether by accepting *realpolitik* foreign policy goals as the determinants of domestic policies, we are properly discharging our civilizational obligations to posterity.

To raise these larger questions is not to rule out *realpolitik* altogether but rather to put it in a larger framework of goals. *Realpolitik* may indeed become necessary at the level of day-to-day responses to other actors on the international scene. But it is important that these responses fit into an overarching civilizational framework. 'National interests', it must be stressed, are transient, they are bound to current territorial units, governments in power and fashionable ideas of the moment. Civilizational concerns, on the other hand, are millennial and, in a creative sense, even utopian; they transcend regimes, territorial changes and ideologies.

The argument and analysis presented in this essay is, as the Germans call it, 'unabsichert', i.e., unprotected against determined attacks. I have also made no attempt to define civilization and culture, the terms are self-evident and yet cannot be defined with precision for operational purposes. Lastly, my purpose is not to analyze concrete foreign policy behaviour but to urge the paramount necessity at the present juncture of growing national and international dangers, of evolving alternative parameters.

**T**erritorially large political units with sizeable population, like India, the United States, the Soviet Union and China, have all shown certain historical 'objective' propensities. They first tend to 'fill out' frontiers by extending political, economic and military control. During this stage, they prefer not to get involved in the conflicts between other nations, although they may express opinions about such conflicts. Next, they acquire a 'world' mission. Finally, they plunge into the ongoing international conflicts as a part of their global mission.

Until the First World War, the United States, Russia and China had their energies absorbed in extending and consolidating control over their own claimed territories. Participation in that war was forced upon them. Even so, they were anxious to disengage from the war and turn to their own pursuits within and around their territories. This attitude of 'isolationism', 'socialism in one country' and 'revolution' persisted in the United States, the Soviet Union and the war-torn China respectively until after the Second World War had begun.

Once again, their participation in that war was forced upon them. But once that war was over, because their enemies had become greatly weakened and because of their size and resources, they emerged as great powers with a global mission which was, as is usual in this century, cloaked in the language of ideology. The fact that the Soviet Union and China were economically and militarily shattered at the end of the



war does not seem to have mattered much.

India has tended to follow this general pattern, perhaps prematurely — for it had not really gotten through the necessary prerequisites — but almost as stridently as the rest of them. Since Independence, it has been busy consolidating its hold on what it considers to be its frontiers. In concrete terms, this has meant moving up the administration up to the McMahon line in the north and the Burmese border in the north-east. The control of the Kashmir valley has remained extremely important. Pakistan has been split when the opportunity offered itself in 1971.

Elsewhere in the north the attempt was to make the Nepal-Tibet border India's defence frontier but with the rise of Nepalese nationalism it had to be abandoned. When the protectorate of Sikkim threatened to follow Nepal, it was incorporated into the Indian Union. The 'special relationship' with Bhutan has, however, facilitated Indian control of its northern border. The Indian leaders were somewhat tardy in filling out the frontier in Ladakh and this led to the conflict with China which had beaten India to the game. But since the India-China border war of 1962, India has more than made up for its early neglect of the Ladakh and Arunachal sectors.

**T**hese preoccupations combined with the problem of nation-building have absorbed most of India's energies. This has led it to stay out of the conflicts among other nations. The Indian expression for this is non-alignment, i.e., staying out of military blocs, but not necessarily being neutral in opinions. We may like to think that non-alignment is a great Indian innovation. But if we look at the history of large powers in the making in modern times, we will find the parallels. The United States, the Soviet Union and China, as mentioned earlier, practised their own version of non-alignment until they acquired a mission which addressed itself to the whole world.

Frontier-building and nation-building still remain incomplete tasks

for India. The Ladakh frontier is still challenged by China and Kashmir is contested by Pakistan. What is more, the 'internal frontiers' in the form of Muslim and other minority problems are yet to be consolidated. These preoccupations may continue for some time India can, therefore, be expected to remain non-aligned. But once these problems are tackled through peaceful or other means, India will seek to emerge as a great power with a global mission. A foretaste of what might happen in the future became available immediately after India's victory in the Bangladesh war in 1971. For a short time at least, the talk of India becoming the 'liberator' of oppressed nations was heard around Delhi.

**D**espite all the current problems, both external and internal, history is propelling India towards a great power status with a potential global role. This means that in the absence of determined recharting of the course, India will proceed to acquire nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery as well as large conventional forces, become an industrial economic power (with or without distributive justice), acquire a global mission and begin to operate to realize it on a global scale.

Already, it is possible to see the beginnings of such a development. We are already a potential nuclear weapons power. And the energetic rejection of the concept of a nuclear weapon free zone for the Indian Ocean keeps the choice legally open. Despite its domestic poverty, India is already an economic power of some magnitude among the Third World countries, during the last two decades, it has given away more than Rs 2,500 crores by way of economic aid and has extended technological expertise to many countries. Politically, Mrs Gandhi noted recently, 'many non-aligned countries look up to us' and she certainly does not take kindly to India's smaller neighbours showing too much independence. As for the global mission, India is yet to evolve a distinct ideology which can be extended to others for their own good. But since the Indian elites are culturally located in the modern West, it is most likely that they will draw

their inspiration and method from the West which offers many models, imperial and otherwise.

\* \* \*

**T**he new Indian nation-State was led by new elites. The intellectual and political elite straddled the East and the West in their value systems; their mental baggage combined transcendental concerns and polytheistic tolerance on the one hand, and modern nationalism, science and secular power, notions of equality, rationality and modernity on the other. While this was a mixed baggage, the bureaucratic elite was brought up in the western educational system, upheld the rule of law and regulations in their public life and were thoroughly imbued with western secular values in their private life.

Similarly, the elite in the armed forces had, by and large, imbibed a western outlook, they operated according to western military and organizational doctrines and lived a western mode of life, literally outside the Indian society in 'cantonments'. Lastly, the foreign policy elite, by virtue of their training (western diplomatic practice) and physical location (in westernized ghettos of foreign capitals and in New Delhi) cultivated loyalty to an abstract Indian State but were connected with the real India primarily through electronic links.

Of these, only the political elite had any Indian civilizational concerns, the others had primarily modernist and other 'secular' concerns. The former had rebelled against at least some aspects of the western civilization, the latter had effortlessly switched political loyalty from one political unit to another. Gradually, the various elites began to melt into one another. The children of politicians became bureaucrats, diplomats and soldiers. The latter often entered politics. The children of all these elites tended to marry within the larger charmed circle.

The total ethos of these elites has been to strive for a modern — essentially western — nation with an 'Indian' icing. Vis-a-vis the external



[world, their's is an integrationist quest, they want India to integrate into the international hierarchy of nations but want a higher *niche* for it. This aim can be achieved, they believe, only through power. India must become united by doing away with the traditional divisions of caste, religion, language and regional affiliations, all loyalty must be primarily to the nation

To enable the nation to operate effectively in the international arena, it must be provided with a strong political centre. Modern armed forces must be equipped with the best available weapons and kept in a constant state of readiness, the determination to protect one's borders and to enforce irredentist claims must be visibly demonstrated. The country's influence abroad must be reinforced with 'positive' publicity.

Such an ethos which defines one's identity primarily as an actor on the international scene, leads to the reification of 'national interests' and the loss of moorings in one's own civilization. 'National security' becomes the highest value to which all other values are asked to be subordinated. Brothers in the subcontinent separated by political borders are required to become enemies if the governments on either side come into conflict. Travel to religious centres on either side is controlled in the name of national security. Scholarly exchanges become suspect. History is rewritten to serve current national goals. In short, politics is put in firm command of culture.

Since it is power that one strives for, it is also power that one respects in others. A whole series of Indian foreign policy decisions can be understood in terms of power. In the post-World War II world, the United States emerged as the largest power at the head of the western bloc on the world scene. The Soviet Union, although it looked clearly emergent, was an operational power only in its own region. So, when it came to diplomatic choices on the world scene, India was respectful of western power. It is, thus, that in 1947 India recognized Israel and in 1950 voted in the United Nations to

declare North Korea the aggressor.

India also did not recognize the governments of East Germany, North Vietnam and North Korea which were regarded as illegitimate by the United States and the western bloc. Even as late as 1967, India refrained from supplying jute bags to North Vietnam because of American objections. The present Prime Minister, during her anti-CIA tirades or in justifying Indian policy on Kampuchea or Afghanistan, may talk valiantly of our solidarity with Vietnam, but history is not on her side. She also conveniently forgets that we had knowingly allowed the CIA to not just operate from our soil but also to provide training to our own intelligence cadres.

Soviet power impinged upon India only after the mid-1960s. Since then India has avoided direct criticism of any Soviet action such as intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968, the presence of the Soviet navy in the Indian Ocean, its acquisition of facilities along the littoral and its military invasion of Afghanistan. Soviet power was also brought in as an ally during the Bangladesh crisis as a counterweight against a perceived threat from China in 1971. Most recently, the recognition of the Heng Samrin regime in Kampuchea has also to be attributed to Soviet political pressure.

And, yet, the Indian elites have shown a clear preference for the West. Despite live memories of the British colonial rule, India continued its membership of the commonwealth. Cultural and commercial links with the West, rather than being reduced after independence, were vastly expanded. Military hardware, until it was denied, came exclusively from the West and military officers were trained exclusively in the West not only to operate the hardware but in military doctrine and concepts.

Diplomatic officials continued to be trained in the West and absorbed most of the ideas about the ways of the world (including life-styles and dinner-table etiquette) from the West, particularly the English-speaking part of the West. Accep-

ability to the western world in almost all realms of Indian life has continued to be highly prized.

The natural propensity of the Indian elites is, thus, to integrate into the western world but, as mentioned earlier, without getting sucked into the West's active conflicts with the East. This natural propensity asserted itself during the Sino-Indian border war when Nehru, despite his own occasional anti-western stance, seemed prepared to make India almost a part of the western political and military grouping. He subsequently retracted from this early impulse but continued the arrangements with the American military and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) which continued well into Mrs. Gandhi's tenure. (In contrast, the Indo-Soviet treaty of 1971 kept India out of the Soviet military bloc.)

All this probably explains why the Indian elites feel so threatened by the perceived closeness of relations between the United States and China, far more threatened than when an actual alliance between the Soviet Union and China was in force.

But, like all human propensities, this one, too, contains a large measure of ambivalence. This arises largely from the colonial experience of the elites, particularly the racial aspect of it which directly offended their sense of dignity. The Soviet Union, in contrast, was seen as being free of racism. Its relations with its dependencies were, therefore, not looked upon as colonial or neo-colonial and India's relations with it could become less defensive.

The revulsion against white racism explains, within the generally anti-colonial stance, the differentiated attitudes towards anti-colonial struggles. India's support to Indonesia's struggle against the Dutch was much stronger than Vietnam's struggle against the French, and today the guerillas in Timor fighting Indonesian domination get no Indian support whatsoever.

Similarly, India has been much more vociferous against the white racist regimes in Africa than about



the genocidal acts of tribal regimes in Africa, the megalomania of the Idi Amins and the Bokassas, or even about the persecution of Asians by some African regimes. Zionist Israel is much less acceptable than militant Shi'i or Sunni regimes in West Asia. Lastly, Soviet intervention in Hungary (1956), in Czechoslovakia (1968) and in Afghanistan (1979-80) as well as the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea do not qualify for condemnation, only qualified disapproval, largely because there has been no racial angle to these events.

**A**mbivalence has also marked the Indian leaders' attitude towards the Soviet Union. *Realpolitik* dictates that Soviet power be respected and be used as a countervailing force against western military and political (but not ideological) encroachment. At the same time, the culturally West-oriented Indian leaders have been wary of Soviet ideological influence spreading in India. Cultural and academic links with the Soviet bloc have never been positively promoted. Even commercial and military links have been developed only to the extent other markets and sources are denied to India. There are no conceptual Soviet inputs into Indian diplomatic and military thinking.

Despite the Indo-Soviet treaty, India has set up no machinery for regular bilateral consultations and action on each country's problems with the rest of the world. So far, the Soviet Union, for its own reasons, has supported India on every controversial issue. Kashmir, China, Pakistan, Sikkim, Bangladesh and even the internal Emergency. But India has not likewise extended any positive support to controversial issues of vital Soviet interests. All this means that the Indian leaders can do what Sadat did to the Soviet Union without any regrets whatsoever if the Soviet Union ever becomes positively critical of India's domestic or foreign policies, or switches sides between India and Pakistan.

16 Despite being a part of Asia, India's foreign policy has had no Asia-orientation to speak of. Jawaharlal Nehru as a person did often

think in pan-Asian terms. He felt proud of Asia when Japan defeated Russia in 1905. He took the initiative to hold the Asian Relations Conference (1946) and the Bandung Conference (1955). He also showed magnanimity in waiving war-reparations from Japan. He promptly recognized the communist regime in China — the fact that Britain had almost decided to do so and the U.S. was yet to become hostile to the idea was helpful — and developed close political relations with it in the teeth of violent American opposition. And he took keen interest in the conferences on Indochina.

But even Nehru's interest remained only at the political level and that too in the context of mediating between the two blocs engaged in a cold war which threatened to hot up and engulf the whole of Asia including India. He did next to nothing in promoting cultural or academic links with the countries of Asia. Trade remained at an abysmally low level. India's diplomatic missions, except in South Asia, were accorded low priority. In short, Nehru seemed to attach some weight to the abstract concept of Asia and Asianness but very little to the concrete reality of Asia and Asians.

**N**ehru's colleagues and the Indian elites in general hardly took any notice of Asia. China became important only to the extent its presence was felt on India's northern border, not as another centre of an Asian civilization trying to come to terms with the twentieth century. The Indian elites seem to have convinced themselves that they had earned the leadership of Asia by virtue of having imbibed the best of the West to pilot the destinies of twentieth century Asia. This is why when China emerged at Bandung as an entity in its own right on the regional and world scene, it was looked upon as an upstart. This is, again, why when the relationship with China began to deteriorate, it went downhill very rapidly, within three years India and China were at war. There was nothing in the India-China relationship beyond politics to restrain the headlong crash. (In the aftermath of the war, persons of ethnic Chinese origin, regardless

of their nationality, were regarded as enemy aliens.)

The neglect of Asia is likely to continue in the absence of positive cultural interest. The Janata regime, possibly because it was more sensitive to civilizational concerns, sought to correct this neglect by seeking to forge closer links with Southeast Asia and Japan but unfortunately this proved short-lived and the present regime has reversed whatever little was attempted in this direction.

It is only in the case of the India-Pakistan relationship that civilizational issues, though not civilizational concerns, have dominated policy right from the start. Indian nationalism would have remained confined to a very small westernized elite, and therefore ineffective, had religion not been brought into the struggle against British imperialism. However, once having been brought in, religion immediately came into conflict with the secularist values of the westernized elite. Moreover, the newly awakened Islamic and Hindu identities came into conflict with each other as well. The result was the separation of an Islamic Pakistan from a politically secular but inevitably Hindu dominated India. (The predominantly Christian Nagas and Mizos also started separatist movements which continue until today.)

So the problems between India and Pakistan have not only been those between two nationalist elites but those encompassing religious and other cultural issues as well. The single most troublesome issue, Kashmir, is not a simple matter of irredentist claims but one which centres around the still unresolved debate between the theological (Islamic) and the ideological (nationalist-secularist) definitions of nationhood.

**P**ending the resolution of this debate, *realpolitik* with its formal and informal alliances, arms build-up and diplomatic games in international forums, has taken over Civilizational concerns like the future of subcontinental religions, the evolution of an appropriate political system to suit the unparalleled diversity in the subcontinent, the



threat of a nuclear war, escalating military spending etc., are all reduced to points to be scored against the other side in the pursuit of *realpolitik*

In the name of national interest, both sides have restricted access to places of pilgrimage, kept families divided, drastically reduced and sometimes stopped trade and almost stopped cultural and academic exchanges. In short, a shared civilization has been reduced to a zero-sum game of politics (Again, the Janata government tried to make amends by taking some imaginative steps designed to foster subcontinental relations and allay the fears of smaller neighbours but most of these have since been reversed)

The foregoing analysis has focused on the Indian elites' own frame of mind on foreign policy. It has not taken into account Indian reactions to acts undertaken by foreign powers. Obviously, other powers do play the game of *realpolitik* and many of them have been on the world scene before India became independent. Some powers probably do engage in subversion, and political, economic and military pressures. But the question I have tried to pose is whether we should tailor all our responses according to the rules of the same game. And, more importantly, whether we should play the same game vis-a-vis the powers which are smaller and weaker than us. A confident society does not need to fear subversion or pressures nor practise them against others.

It is justified for a society to guard against acts of physical sabotage and naked military aggression. But that does not mean that the definition of national interest or national security should be made so wide that it becomes a case of *nation uber alles*. If a strong centre, centralized police forces, a privileged national language, an urbanized industrial economy, agricultural monocultures, a synthetic 'secular' culture and a 'modern' education system are promoted at the cost of local autonomy, community conflict resolution, the diversity of languages, economies and cultures and classical learning, what happens to the Indian civilization

whose very essence is diversity and autonomous development? This question is relevant to foreign policy because these domestic policies are justified by our elites in the name of standing up to the rest of the world.

\* \* \*

India is a large political unit which gives it the propensity of becoming a great power. The nationalism of its elites has little, if any, cultural component. In fact, the cultural location of India's foreign policy lies outside the Indian civilization. India's role in international affairs is conceived and executed in terms of a model of nationalism that is externally induced and reactive. The highest aim of such a nationalism can only be the maximization of power in the name of some global mission, a euphemism for hegemonism of one kind or the other. The consequence of this for domestic politics is the rise of the national security State which looks upon all dissent and all non ruling party activities as subversive which weaken the State and help the enemies who are obligingly lurking behind every bush.

Those who, as inheritors of the Indian civilization, feel an obligation to nourish it, rectify its shortcomings through cultural criticism and to pass it on to posterity must actively seek an alternative aim for India. There can be no cut-and-dried answers to Lenin's classical question 'What is to be done?'. Alternatives must be allowed to emerge by letting our perspective and vision about ourselves as a civilization define India's contribution to the world mosaic of civilizations. Then, since it is necessary to operate in a world of *realpolitik*, one must determine from time to time which of the alternatives are possible.

The alternative to making the Indian State strong is to aim at becoming a self-confident, principled and just society. The alternative to *realpolitik* is to jointly explore millennial civilizational concerns with others not only at the political level but at all other levels of human endeavour. This requires utopian imagination, patience and humility, not national *machismo*.



# A changing world

ROMESH THAPAR

EVEN a fleeting contact with official Indian thinking on the making of foreign policy suggests that we are very much anchored to the old notion that global events are moulded almost exclusively by the calculations of the so-called super powers. It is a way of thinking which influences the press and a large section of analysts, and sends out comforting signals about how our Soviet links, growing stronger every day, guarantee national security. This rather simplistic reading of international developments in a fast-changing world has reduced us to diplomatic impotence.

The slow paralysis that has overtaken the Foreign Office was best illustrated by the large number of important embassies which lay empty for several months, followed by the belated appointment as am-

bassadors of men unlikely to command any attention. Admittedly, Mrs Gandhi's personnel policy is much affected by her warmth of feeling for courtiers and the like, but even at the level of policy formulation, there has been no effort to strengthen the economic expertise in our diplomatic outposts or to organise a much-needed 'think-tank' in the Foreign Office or attached to it. Unending political manipulation is turning our expensive foreign service into a meaningless, elitist, uncommitted army of well-dressed, perk-oriented, clueless cadres. They can yet be salvaged, but there is no one with the stomach to do the salvaging.

While it is now becoming clear that there is an Indian biological resistance to establishing institutional infrastructures which cut



across the individual brain-waving by political leaders, bureaucrats and their aides, it is equally clear that excellence is no longer sought. We are sailing on the whims and hunches of a strange crowd of charismatic adventurers, policy fixers whose global involvements raise many embarrassing questions, and lobbyists of 'Left' and 'Right' who always seem to have the wherewithal for projecting themselves. This sort of situation could be rationalised for some beggar kingdom, but not for a country with pretensions to guide and consolidate a whole region of the world.

An intellectual laziness, which expresses itself in an obsession with the clichés of yesterday, prevents us from seeing the extraordinary changes that are taking place in international relationships and the power of nations. The physical exhaustion of the US industrial thrust — something which could revive and become innovative, but which shows no signs of it at the present — is now visibly demonstrated by its inability to tackle its energy and related problems at a time when a host of technological challenges are developing to its industrial supremacy. The Soviet Union, with all its outward show of military muscle, is deeply compromised by the contradictions developing within the communist system — Poland is a powerful manifestation — and when it is unable to solve the problems of its own economic well-being, particularly in agriculture, let alone the medieval backwardness of its management in all spheres.

These widely acknowledged facts of the cutting of super power capacity to dictate both diagnosis and treatment without consulting impatient partners is further underlined by the sharp strengthening of other centres of resurgent power — the Arab oil exporters who can strangle those dependent on them, West Germany's independent industrial capability which crystallises the politics of a European *detente*, and Japan's profound technological breakthroughs which could, in combination with the collectivist ethos of China, the Koreans and Vietnam, transform the familiar political/economic patterns on the Asian

mainland. The world is awakening to these new realities. Our eyes are shut — except, perhaps, for oil, having failed to organise our own resources in good time.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Indian mind, laziness apart, is living in a jungle of very mixed up ideas rooted in the western notions of the twenties and thirties. A surfeit of emotion clouded and obscured many hard facts of these decades and created black-and-white theories about the glory of the Bolshevik Revolution and, counter-wise, the wars of intervention against the young Soviets, the Great Depression and the 'inevitable' crisis of capitalism, the polarisations around the Spanish Civil War, the brutalities of Stalinism, Fascism and Nazism, the various political phases of World War II, and the contrasting liberations of a large part of the colonial and semi-colonial world, particularly India and China.

These fifty years of tempestuous global development were sought to be crystallised into two power blocs. Non-alignment was the appropriate weapon to fight a new thralldom. It yielded many dividends. It isolated the bloc leaders into super powers and created a third world consciousness. But, unfortunately, it stopped there. It failed to sensitise itself to the special consciousness of the 'hinterland' of the super powers — Europe (East and West) and Japan/China/the Koreans/Vietnam — and in so doing exposed itself to the lobbyists of the super powers within the ranks of the non-aligned. This is the mud in which we are stuck.

But the world we live in is undergoing profound transformations. The super powers are certainly beginning to look as if they are muscle-bound. Apart from the paralysing influence they have on each other, the USA in Vietnam, and the USSR in Afghanistan, have learned the extent of their powerlessness in the face of intense nationalism, modern or traditional. The studied refusal of Washington and Moscow to conduct a genuine two-way exchange of opinion and advice with their partners has created increasing

antagonisms which today even challenge some of the basic assumptions of the military alliances that have been forged. In varying degrees, the cement of the polarised world we have known has been disturbed by China, West Germany and Japan. These assertions carry economic propulsions which we have not even begun to comprehend.

While we may enjoy the discomfiture of western analysts and scenario writers over the US presidential election, where the voter cast his ballot like 'the peasants of Asia', the massive emergence of the Reagan party — an instrument of the mafia networks — marks a qualitative change in the international situation. The European and Japanese alliances — and, may be, even the Chinese — on which the USA has so far based its operations are now powerfully threatened. The growing anger against a super power that refuses to consult with its allies, is reluctant to seek ways of defusing developing confrontations, and to accept a certain equality despite military dependence, is dramatically heightened. Against this background, the aggressive noises of Reagan and his associates could, in a hostile global atmosphere, prepare the way psychologically for a neo-isolationism which is always alive under the US political surface. However, the inevitability of the rise of Europe and Japan (China/Korea/Vietnam?) as independent factors on the world scene can no longer be treated as theoretical.

Japan and West Germany, for example, represent new consolidations of innovative, virile, growing industrial and technological power. It is no longer valid to treat these two nations as if they were mere appendages of a US sphere of influence, an obsession which was carefully cultivated by Soviet lobbyists and which vitiates clear thinking in our Foreign Office. These two nations, totally defeated in World War II, were the recipients of technological assistance of the most advanced kind. Their high degree of talent and skill worked on those technologies, outpacing the donors. Today, the US automobile manufacturers queue up for collabora-



tions with the Japanese car makers who dominate international markets. And this is only the beginning. The revolution in micro-electronics will shatter many existing economic citadels within a few years.

Our policy planners should have seen these trends well ahead of time. They were forecastable. And there were unique elements bound up with them. Both Japan and Germany were free of imperial involvement and the calculations tied up with spheres of influence. It was possible to use their technologies to bridge the serious gaps in our indigenous Research and Development, gaps which make a mockery of our self-reliance. We saw nothing. We continued to parrot the cliché of yester year — that in the face of US super power hostility and intrigue we turn to the assistance of a friendly super power, the USSR, forgetting the existence of other centres of assistance.

Lazy minds, mixed-up minds, insecure minds, corrupted minds, have broken our will to alter and correct policies which damage our growth and prosperity, our self-reliance. A healthy stirring on the Siemens collaboration brought on a ferocious attack from the questionable Soviet technology of BHEL. The re-tooling of our rusted automobile industry was directed westwards, even England-wards, when Japan was the leader. And so, too, in steel. The 'west' means 'advance' to us. Every move to introduce new technology was blunted on the strange plea that self-reliance is destroyed by a turn-key project around the latest technology — yes, and never was there a mention of the neglect of vigorous Research and Development to build on the imported technologies now reduced to near junk.

**W**e are today possessed of a foreign policy which serves no ends whatsoever. Our escalating misunderstandings with the USA have come to a point of hostile postures. The alignment with the USSR is so subservient that the possibility of a damaging back-lash cannot be ruled out. *Detentism*, which was to provide a framework for normalising our relations with our neighbours, was dealt a grievous blow by an at-

tempted justification of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Our rigidities *vis-a-vis* China were reinforced by our sudden partisanship over the government of Kampuchea. How does all this appear to the world? We say that Afghanistan's occupation is in our national interest. Vietnam's operation in Kampuchea is also in our national interest. ASEAN susceptibilities be damned. And as for Iran and Iraq, we hide in the shadows because oil is our national interest. Our non-alignment has come to mean so many opportunist postures that it invites derision in serious discussion.

**T**he dismay is all the greater because there was no reason for India to adopt the postures which were destructive of our non-aligned position. Our relationship with the Soviet Union, unnecessarily entangled in 1971 by a treaty of friendship and alliance, was based on so many objectives jointly shared — and without friction points. It was necessary always to emphasise India's value to the Soviet Union to prevent subservience in crisis times. This was not done.

At the other end of the scale, the anti-Soviet hysteria of the USA inevitably distorted attitudes to India. But it was necessary to live with this problem. After all, aid of many descriptions, including food, was requested. An intelligent attitude would have made this aid creative rather than corrosive.

The China equation was more difficult, but when the post-Maoist reforms got under way, the opportunity to restore a fruitful working relationship was spurned. The neglect of ASEAN reflected the embarrassing tilts in our non-alignment. Afghanistan, Kampuchea, the Iraq-Iran conflict demanded prompt and courageous non-aligned initiatives, particularly by India because of her potential weightage in these situations. Only the most inept and stupid would have allowed the affairs of the region to get so disjointed.

However, we are fortunate that opportunity is again opening for a correction. The wide repercussions of the US presidential election,

Soviet embarrassments and uncertainties about the near colonial involvements in Afghanistan and East Europe, the profound upsets in commitment and alignment in a divided Arab world, the dramatic changes in China's attitudes, and the determination of Japan and Germany to develop independent political and economic thrusts in Asia and Europe, do not suggest anything like a return to a second cold war. This is a new stupidity being actively peddled. They imply a remarkable softening up of diplomatic positions, providing scope for permutation and combination with the immense immobilised power of the southern hemisphere. Add to this the explosive situation in South Africa, and you realise that the thinking in New Delhi on foreign policy needs heavy revision.

**N**o touch of renewal is possible so long as our three lobbies are not stamped out or made ineffective — US, Soviet and Arab. They have made a mockery of our capacity to speak our mind, independently and in good faith, at various times during this last decade. Indeed, we have developed the habit of moving through a maze of contrary sensitivities by pretending to be concerned about critical international issues. We have been, in fact, side-stepping our responsibilities, internal and external, using different yardsticks for each lobby depending on our assessment of its use to us. This is diplomacy, but not when it is without principle or perspective.

Every nation is plagued by lobbies of various description, but the institutional infrastructure is usually adequate to cope with the artificial tensions and confrontations which are so arranged. In India, what little infrastructure existed has been dismantled at party and government levels. Today, we are at the mercy of a single person's likes and dislikes. Our policy-making — whatever the licking of chops over the embarrassment of Pakistan following the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan! — reflects this aberration. The potential continuities in our foreign policy are no more. Even the Soviet connection, creatively conceived, is now spawning an unequal relationship — and, frankly,



very much to the detriment of what is a vital connection

The opportunistic over-playing of the Soviet connection can have disastrous internal repercussions by throwing foreign policy into grave controversy — and particularly at a time when the country is severely polarised at the political level. Already, a counter policy, based almost exclusively on a Chinese equation, is being posed. What India has to work for is a careful balance of relationships which secures us internally and externally, and makes for Asian peace and solidarity. In other words, we have to break free of the thinking that the lobbies tend to impose on us so as to prepare a visible alternative foreign policy which enjoys the wide support of the nation. Until this is done, we are destined repeatedly to compromise our sovereign thinking with a mess of fatuous rationalisations

**I**n the new climate, countries like India have to lead the complex struggle against armaments, for disarmament, and to link this struggle integrally with moves to establish a viable and intelligent *detente* in their respective regions. The challenge before India does not need spelling out. It is as vivid as one could expect it to be. Indeed, the struggle against the armament drive, and the acceptance of *detentist* postures will mark the genuinely non-aligned from the rest in the period now unfolding. And this applies with double force to the Islamic world which has yet to rise above its various euphorias and to come to grips with its very sick economic situation still untouched by the flood of petro-dollars

It is incredible how every tin-pot dictator imagines that a military build up is the answer to the problems of his land, medieval or modern, feudal or capitalist or communist. India was always restrained in this respect, and most careful about internal stability, but of late one cannot but mark a new flavouring in internal/external attitudes. Yes, 'foreign hands' and 'conspiracies' *et al* to explain away the traumas of a people mismanaged and misled. It is a mistake to ignore these first signs of a change in the political weather.

The search for an alternative foreign policy cannot be conducted in the usual haphazard fashion. Its central axis has to be a *detente* within the region, and this means primarily between India and China. The adventurism of Beijing disrupted this scenario. It was sought to be salvaged, but was again damaged by the tactical needs of the USSR against China and *via* Vietnam/Kampuchea. The Afghanistan events have crystalised the threat to the *detente*, and even posed the problem of a military rearming at tremendous cost on the sub-continent. Such a re-arming would rob the sub-continent of the resources to pay for its economic reorganisation, embroil it in endless tensions which would be exploited by the USA and USSR for their own ends.

**I**f a *detentist* policy were restructured, after the dislocations over the past few months on Afghanistan, Kampuchea and the Iran-Iraq conflagration, it would become obvious that the play between the two so-called super powers has to be replaced by an intelligent system of diversified relationships. This would bring the potential of Japan and Germany — and ASEAN — into focus without in any way damaging our contacts with the USSR and Vietnam — and simply because our strategic global situation is of great value to the realists who plot their internationalism in the heavy secrecy of a totalitarian system. Too often do our spokesmen and planners, at political and official level, forget the many decisive cards that India carries. And, alas, we invariably lack the necessary gumption to play against odds.

As the global challenges of the eighties begin to take tangible shape, it is obvious to sensitive, thinking persons that India cannot permit its foreign policy to become the subject of individual tantrums and definitions. If we are serious about a democratic underpinning, free of lobbying, then the making of policy must be given an institutional basis. India moves unsteadily in the international jungle because she fails to establish a flow of varied research, skill and talent. It is an unsteadiness that can destabilise us if we do not take warning in time.



# Timid search for status

BHARAT WARIAVWALA

THE assertion that India has always searched for her 'rightful' place in the world will invite surprise, shock or scorn from Indians. The surprised will ask, do we really aspire for status? The shocked will indignantly deny any such ambition. And the scornful will sincerely question whether we really have the power and will to work for such a worthy end. All the three reactions are understandable, indeed natural. For, the Indian who wants his country to have a status in world affairs is inarticulate, moralistic and timid. There is yet no articulate, much less eloquent, spokesman of India's grandeur in the way de Gaulle was of France. Has anyone heard an Indian pronounce that India cannot be India without grandeur? Nor have we had a Wilson, a Roosevelt or a Lenin who would say that history has invested India with a global purpose.

But, the absence of a de Gaulle, a Wilson, a Lenin or a Mao does not imply that there are no Indian aspirants to global status. There are, but their aspirations are never articulated, and are often concealed in moral pronouncements. Major foreign policy statements read like vapid moral discourses, replete with references to Buddha and Gandhi, and many of them end with the invocation of the Panchsheel, our mantra for world peace. We talk like Sweden but act like France, the US or the USSR, or would like to act so. Of course, that depends on how the sailing goes: if it's smooth and safe we will do a Sikkim or a 1971, if it's turbulent we stop, as we seem to have stopped from carrying to the logical end the policy that began with the

Pokharan experiment. We are timid status seekers.

The man in the street and the occupant of 1 Safdarjung Road believe we're great. Size, population and resources are some of the visible measures of our greatness, the modernized Indian believes. But the traditional in him tells him that the real source of our greatness is our civilization. The axiomatic belief that we're great has the deepest hold precisely because it grips Indians subliminally. And, if our greatness has so far been fully recognized, it is for two reasons: one, incidentally held by a majority, that some foreign powers have kept us tangled in regional conflicts, two, held by a few, that we lack the internal strength to be great. But the belief in our greatness persists, at times feebly and at other times with gusto, but it has never been extinguished. This is why there's never been even a faint voice here asking for isolation from global involvements, much less even a momentary retreat from them. We rightly oppose the non-proliferation treaty because it legitimizes the present power hierarchy which we would like to subvert. We want to be in the hierarchy.

Nehru sought a role for India by seizing upon the historical current sweeping the third world in the fifties. Anti-colonialism, independence and the desire to escape the cold war rivalry were the deep urges of a majority of the newly emancipated countries of Asia and Africa and Nehru articulated them by advancing the concept of non-alignment. No great intellectual effort was expended in the formulation of the concept but it served us



well and many third world countries. Basically, non-alignment was the way the weak and the vulnerable could conduct their foreign relations with dignity and self-respect. The African scholar, Ali Mazrui, calls non-alignment the great gift of India to Africa.

What concerns me here is Nehru's conception of our regional role and how it contrasts with the way we conduct our regional affairs today. For Nehru our regional role was not something distinct from our extra-regional role, in fact, one grew out of the other. His idea of the subcontinent as an 'area of peace' was an extension of his larger idea of creating as many areas of peace as possible in the third world. The Indian leader's central concern was not just to limit the extension of the Soviet-American competition in the third world, but to create for it a role in shaping global affairs. In this he presaged the rich-poor conflict or, to use its modern anaemic equivalent, the north-south relationship.

Pakistan brought the east-west competition to the sub-continent by contracting a security treaty with the United States in 1954. Yet, Nehru's response to Pakistani intrusion in our 'area of peace' was basically diplomatic. He successfully seized the leadership of the third world, isolated Pakistan from it and maintained varying degrees of friendship with the powers that had the capability to harm or further India's interests — thus a little away from the United States and a little closer to China and the Soviet Union. But, he shunned security links with any great power. And in the region Nehru exercised India's preponderance, that came to her by the sheer fact of size with caution and care. He respected the sovereignty and, more importantly, the sensitivities of the region's small powers. This in essence was India's regional role under Nehru.

Where are we today in this region? We are more entangled in quarrels and conflicts with our neighbours which we could have escaped had we opted for a modest regional role. From preponderance cautiously exercised in the fifties to dominance aspired for in the sixties and

clearly pursued in the seventies is the time span during which our external orientation and internal political structure greatly changed. No doubt the domestic structure of a country determines to some extent its external orientation, but this is not the place for a full exploration of how one determines the other. I'll simply note here the striking coincidence between the political structure we've had since the beginning of the seventies and the kind of foreign policy we have pursued since.

Briefly put<sup>1</sup>, we aspired for the dominance of the sub-continent in the sixties and pursued the design in the seventies, though timidly. What explains this change in our regional role? A good part of the explanation lies in the deteriorating security environment of the sub-continent since 1962. In the succeeding decade, we fought three wars, 1962, 1965 and 1971, and it is during these troubled times that regional alignments were profoundly altered. After 1962 China was clearly aligned with Pakistan and the Soviet Union with India.

The United States, too involved in Vietnam, basically maintained a stance of 'benign neglect' (from 1965 to 1970), but changed to one of 'malign involvement' when its interests so demanded — the Nixon-Kissinger tilt' in 1971. The non-alignment of the fifties which prospered in a relatively more tranquil sub-continent and which permitted us great flexibility in our relations with the great powers, was no longer possible to pursue after 1962.

Security through regional dominance may well be the realization imposed on us by the deteriorating security environment of the sub-continent. But that is a partial, even a larger, part of the explanation of why India seeks regional dominance. The way the Indian leadership has perceived its security needs since 1970 provides the rest of the answer as to why we have opted for a new regional role.

1 See my 'South Asian Security System' in "Nuclear Proliferation in Developing Countries", IFES Research Series No 14, Seoul, Korea.

The security perceptions of a nation are not something constant, unchanged, they also change, depending on their internal political order. Imperial Japan believed that it could only be secure by establishing a 'co-prosperity sphere in south-east Asia', post-War Japan believes that its security lies in peaceful commercial exchange between nations. Kennedy thought America was insecure so long as Castro ruled Cuba, Nixon had to learn to live with Castro's Cuba. And here, the Janata Party sought security through a policy of 'good-neighbourliness', the Congress-I leadership has criticized that policy as 'soft', and instead wants a 'firm' policy towards our neighbours.

At any rate, once we reshaped the sub-continent to our liking in 1971, we took various steps to further our regional dominance. Sikkim was integrated and attempts (unsuccessful) to install our men in Dacca were made after the assassination of Mujibur Rahman in August 1975. Again, there was no great determination to push forward our regional design, but the design was unmistakably there. Besides, we had the support of our treaty partner, the Soviet Union, for our new regional policy.

The desire to maintain and further our regional status and the belief that only the Soviets support our regional aspirations (the belief is patently mistaken, for both the US and China recognize our status in the region) are the two most important conditioning factors behind our stand on Afghanistan.

But, this apart, the problems posed by the Soviet armed takeover of Afghanistan are very complex, some plainly intractable one, it's an armed intervention by a super power in a country already recognized as falling in the Soviet security sphere, two, by its occupation of Afghanistan, Soviet capability to reward and punish Pakistan has increased. Whichever way Moscow chooses — to reward or punish Pakistan — India can only end up the loser.

Even if Moscow chooses to reward Pakistan by not aggravating the separatist Baluch and Pakhtoon



movements in return for Pakistan accepting the Soviet installed regime in Kabul, India stands to lose. Implicit in the Soviet reward strategy for Pakistan is the possibility of a Soviet-Pak understanding. Some in Delhi fear such an understanding because not only would it increase Soviet influence in Pakistan but it could lead to a rivalry between India and the Soviet Union for influence in a region we regard as our preserve. How ironical that treaty partners should become rivals.

In the event the Soviets choose to punish Pakistan by attempting to undo its fragile unity, India will end up a sure loser. A balkanized Pakistan will be India's nightmare. The third important consequence of the Soviet move in Afghanistan is of course that it has sparked off a new round of Soviet-American rivalry around the sub-continent. As the super rivals gird themselves up for the contest, there will be that much more pressure on us and all non-aligned countries to choose between Washington and Moscow.

**W**e've chosen, but our choice is obscured by qualifications, ambiguities and innuendos we always attach to our major foreign policy pronouncements. Sometimes we seem to think that draftsmanship is a substitute for policy decisions. Our choice — that we are largely with the Soviets — was made clear in the statement of the Indian representative to the UN in January 1980. Despite the subsequent change and even the partial repudiation of the January speech, I consider it to be the most important statement of our views and assessment of the regional and global situations as they have evolved since the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The January statement said the Soviet intervention was requested by the government of Kabul and that the intervention itself was in response to the provocative activities of some countries (Pakistan, the US and China by clear implication).

The basic tenets of the January statement have been upheld by the Prime Minister in a number of her statements since then. In her address to the just concluded meeting of the

Commonwealth Prime Ministers of the Asian and Pacific Region, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi said the Soviet Union fears 'encirclement' by the West. 'In Soviet eyes, the dice was loaded against the Eastern bloc from the start. The alignment of China with the US since 1972 and its confirmation since 1979 in a tri-continental "trilateralism" has profoundly shaken the Soviet psyche, as in the years after the October Revolution.'<sup>2</sup>

Often in our statements we explain, while formally disapproving, the Soviet action in Afghanistan as a 'reaction' to the policies of others in the Indian Ocean. Yet, has anyone thought that the Soviets by their own acts precisely provoke the encirclement they fear — e.g., the Berlin blockade and the onset of the cold war, the Ussuri clash preparing the way for Chinese-American rapprochement. Or when there is no encirclement, Moscow invents one — the demand for independent trade unions in Poland today is explained away as the work of the 'imperialists' and 'reactionaries'.

By acquiescing in the Soviet armed take-over of Afghanistan and recognizing Kampuchea we have indicated to the Soviets that we are basically with them in their global rivalry with the United States and China. But our stand on Afghanistan and Kampuchea has cost us estranged relations with many non-aligned countries, the ASEAN, some Islamic countries, some countries of our region and most tragic, the illwill of the Afghan people. Brezhnev graciously acknowledged Delhi's tilt toward Moscow when he recently told the visiting Afghan leader, Babrak Karmal, the great contribution India was making to the cause of peace in Asia.

**W**e have served neither our interests nor any principles by the stand we've taken on Afghanistan. But such a statement may well be dismissed as naive by some scholars, journalists, and ex-diplomats who believe that our stand on Afghanistan eminently serves our national

interests. The influential group claiming to adhere to *realpolitik* has advanced analyses, views and prescriptions for our policy. It's worth considering them here for they are important. However extreme the group's views, some elements of them, in fact a great many, have entered our policy calculations.

The practitioners of *realpolitik* have one passion — strange though it is for cool practitioners of power politics to have passion — and that is, global status for India via regional dominance. The only way to attain the status, the 'realists' believe, is by an alliance with the Soviet Union, for it alone is interested in seeing India emerge as a strong power. In the realists' calculations the global constellation of forces since 1970 (US-China understanding in 1970 and now with the rise of Saudi Arabia as a pre-eminent power in the Gulf) has been such as to make Indo-Soviet alliance an imminent necessity for both.

**T**hus, when the Soviets compare their intervention in Afghanistan with ours in Bangladesh, it cannot but elate the realists. In the Soviet comparison they see a green signal for India to embark on such a course, should the need arise again. It's no accident that shortly after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan T.N. Kaul called for a Monroe doctrine for the sub-continent, and so incidentally did the *Organizer* — a strange convergence between the secularist and the sectarian for raising the status of the motherland.

What the former Foreign Secretary so forthrightly advocates is secretly desired by many Indians. An India assuming the right of intervention in the region under the Monroe doctrine will surely need the overall protection of the Soviet Union and probably it will extend such protection. Just as the Soviet Union has made Vietnam the bully boy of Indo-China, it would like to see India assume a similar role in the sub-continent. Moscow too wants regional *thekedars* just as Washington does, except that for the US the experience with one



such *thekedar*, the Shah of Iran, turned out to be so bitter

True, all that the realists believe is certainly not shared by the present decision-makers, but the realists' hope to see India emerge as a dominant regional power and the need to have Soviet support in this venture is shared by many. Girilal Jain, sums up well the views of the moderates (as opposed to the realists) when he says that the Soviet Union accords India her 'legitimate place'<sup>3</sup> in the region. But we only dally when it comes to pursuing our regional aims. We fear that a too assertive regional policy may well invite serious international repercussions and, besides, that such a policy may well draw us so close to the Soviets as to provoke Chinese and American hostility. We dread such a prospect. So we keep aspiring for a status in world affairs, but pursue it timidly.

**B**y no means am I suggesting that we shun our regional role and snap our Soviet connection. A regional role devolves on us because we tower over all our neighbours in size, population, resources and the level of technology. Our preponderance in the region is a stark reality, how we exercise that preponderance is a matter that concerns our neighbours. Nor can we afford to seriously weaken our Soviet links, for those links are based on some commonality of economic and security interests. The question then is what kind of regional role should we have in the coming decade and how close or distant should we be from the Soviet Union.

The fact that we simply don't have the power to dominate the sub-continent should be clearly faced. Even the two most successful regional powers, who are also the super powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, find it difficult to maintain their sway over regions which they claim to be in their sphere of influence. In Latin America the United States have to live now with Cuba and Nicaragua and the growing assertiveness of Venezuela, Argentina and Brazil. In East Europe, the Soviet Union has been

able to maintain its hold only by armed interventions. But military power is singularly ineffective in overcoming such demonstrations of independence as the recent demand in Poland for trade unions outside the party control, New Economic Mechanism, as the Hungarians call it and which sharply departs from the Soviet economic model and various movements for human rights in East Europe. The situation in East Europe is potentially so volatile that one cannot dismiss the possibility of the end of the Stalinist empire in the coming decade.

**A**part from military power, India does not have very many other means of influence to cajole and/or coerce her neighbours. And with military power you simply cannot make Nepal conclude the Karnali agreement or Bangladesh agree to the Farakka accord. That perceptive student of international politics, Karl Deutsch, used to remind American hawks at the time of the Vietnam war, that one may have the power to kill a man, but with that power you cannot teach him a piano lesson. We should learn to use our regional preponderance to teach our neighbours piano lessons. In the coming decade of energy scarcity and general economic insecurity it's in our interests to draw both Nepal and Bangladesh into a comprehensive agreement on the eastern rivers.

In short, our regional task should be carefully to lay a basis for regional cooperation with the full consent of our neighbours. We would serve both our interests and ideals by making small steps towards regional cooperation. More than any other region in the third world, the sub-continent has greater cultural, linguistic and ethnic unity. Yet it's the only region in the world without even a rudimentary regional organization. The South East Asian countries have their ASEAN, the Latin Americans their OAS and the Andean Pact, the Africans their OAS and the Arabs their Arab League. True, none of these organizations has yet matured like the EEC, but the kernel for flowering into one like the EEC is at least there. The sub-continent does not even have a kernel for the growth of regional

cooperation and for its absence we, more than our neighbours, deserve the blame. Who refuses to associate Nepal in India-Bangladesh river talks and who cold shouldered General Zia-ur-Rahman's proposal for a summit of South Asian States? We did, because we prefer to deal with our neighbours on an individual and not a collective basis. Our preference for bilateralism shows that either we are afraid to face all our neighbours collectively for fear of being criticized by them or that we believe, indeed mistakenly, that somehow we have more to gain by dealing with our neighbours bilaterally than multilaterally.

Of course one would be foolish to believe that either we or our neighbours are yet ready for serious regional cooperation. But then a climate for regional cooperation is created as much by circumstances as by policies of regional powers. Here, again, India being the strongest power in the region and therefore the natural target of suspicions of her weaker neighbours, cannot force the pace for regional cooperation. That would just result in our neighbours accusing us of aspiring for regional hegemony. But we can discreetly encourage our neighbours into making suggestions for regional cooperation and demonstrate our sincerity to participate in such cooperation, even at the expense of sacrificing some of our sovereignty. If the sub-continent is ever going to evolve into a cooperative community, it will be only when we begin to be magnanimous towards our smaller neighbours. So far all we have shown is chicanery and niggardliness.

**W**hat about Pakistan and her place in the region? The question squarely turns on Indo-Pak relations. Ever since Pakistan contracted a security alliance with the United States in 1954 the belief here is that not only has Pakistan the intention, but also the capability for disrupting any of our moves, policy or design for a cooperative sub-continent. In other words the state of the Indo-Pak relationship is seen by us to be crucial in determining whether the region will be one of

3. *Times of India*, Sept 26, 1980



cooperation or conflict. I think to the contrary. Pakistan just does not have the power seriously to disrupt our design, if we have any, for laying the basis for a cooperative community of South Asian States. At one time Pakistan tried — and how miserably it failed — to rally all of our neighbours against us. Undivided Pakistan under Ayub's leadership attempted some time in the late fifties to forge a loose coalition of some regional States, notably Nepal and Sri Lanka, against us and it got nowhere. Now a dismembered Pakistan, internally unstable, can do little to upset Delhi-Dacca or Delhi-Kathmandu ties. Pakistan weighs so heavily in our minds, but I seriously doubt if Pakistan has been regarded by Nepal, Bangladesh or Sri Lanka as a weight of any importance in their dealings with us. It's questionable whether a policy maker in Dacca, Colombo or Kathmandu thinks that Islamabad's support is necessary in the former's dealing with Delhi. We should see Pakistan as one of the powers in the region, but of no greater importance than Bangladesh, Sri Lanka or Nepal. Thus, one need not wait for improvement in Indo-Pak relations to begin a policy of regional cooperation. Just leave a place in our regional scheme for Pakistan. The choice whether to occupy that place or not should be Pakistan's. Of course Delhi can do a great deal to lure Islamabad towards that choice.

**B**y words and some well thought out policy moves we can discreetly convey to Pakistan that it can have a meaningful role only in the region and that its extra-regional connections (in the past with the US and China and today with Saudi Arabia) do not serve its interests. This means that we first recognise our importance not only in the region but beyond it and the steadily diminishing importance of Pakistan to the extra-regional powers, notably the US and China. In saying this I'm not in the least suggesting that we belittle Pakistan and display our prowess. It is strange that the hardliners, who today shape our stance towards Pakistan, do precisely the opposite: they constantly stress that Pakistan has attained or is about to attain military parity with us and

credit our neighbours with an ability to bring the great power intervention in the region on its behalf.

How often in the past few months has the Prime Minister talked of threats from Pakistan and its alleged supporters, the United States and China? The truth is that there is no Indo-Pak parity, but decisive Indian superiority. And there are no great powers actively supporting Pakistan against us. Brzezinski's offer of \$ 200 million dollars worth of hardware to Pakistan was 'chicken feed', as General Zia rightly said. Here of course, much of the press, echoing the government line, described the US offer as 'massive assistance'. When Pakistanis say that their alliance experience with the United States has turned out to be bitter, we ought to dispassionately examine our neighbour's plaint.

**G**iven the warped perceptions of each other, no common Indo-Pak response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was possible. Pakistan responded to the Soviet move by rallying the Islamic nations against the Soviets. For us that was bad enough but Pakistan made it worse by issuing a call at the two Islamic meetings for the 'liberation' of Kashmir. After a while, we too responded in the only language we have known — accused Pakistan for all the misfortunes of the sub-continent. The central issue of the Soviet rape of Afghanistan was just lost in the perennial Indo-Pak incriminations. A regional response to the Afghan question is surely more feasible now than it was at the time of Aga Shahi's visit last July. The Iran-Iraq war must have demonstrated to General Zia that there is no 'Islamic bloc', if there ever was one. And if we are to help evolve a regional response to the Soviet armed thrust in our region, we will have to first clearly dissociate ourselves from the Soviet position.

Veiled criticism of the Soviet Union, accompanied by qualifications which tend to largely favour the Soviet position on Afghanistan, just won't do. An unequivocal stand asking for the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, combined with efforts at both regional and non-aligned levels to bring

about the withdrawal may work on Moscow.

**T**he Soviet armed takeover of Afghanistan calls for a serious reappraisal of our Soviet connection. If our goal is a cooperative sub-continent free of the excessive influences of external powers, then we must ask whether our security links with an extra-regional power, the Soviet Union, serve our regional goal. Our ties with the Soviet Union should be so shaped as to meet our regional goal. The demise of the sovereignty of our non-aligned neighbour, Afghanistan, has serious consequences for the security of the region. We have power, more than South Block imagines, to influence the Soviet Union. Determined efforts by the non-aligned States to make the Soviets militarily withdraw from Afghanistan will have some impact on the Soviet Union.

Despite some transient gains Moscow has made (Angola, Ethiopia, S. Yemen) it is more isolated than at any time since the thirties. The armed takeover of Afghanistan and Soviet supported occupation of Kampuchea by Vietnam marks the beginning of a new round of Soviet-American and Sino-Soviet rivalries and in these contests the Soviets face a formidable coalition of adversaries — the US, China, Japan, ASEAN, Egypt, Israel and Western Europe. The Kremlin leaders are right when they say they feel 'encircled'. But they themselves have provoked the encirclements they fear. A veiled Indian threat that we might join this 'encirclement' should the Soviets not withdraw from Afghanistan might work on Moscow. At the bi-lateral level too we can put great pressure on Moscow. We're the Soviet Union's most important friend in the third world. South Vietnam and Cuba are kind of storm troopers and their upkeep taxes are steadily weakening Soviet economy. S. Yemen, Angola, Ethiopia and Syria are internally unstable and unreliable besides, (anyone of them can pull a Sadat on Moscow). We are the best ally the Soviets have. It's time we asked Moscow to respect our interests and if it doesn't we should threaten to reappraise the Indo-Soviet relationship.



# Into a soviet december?

MIRA SINHA

THIS year, the year 1980, is sliding swiftly towards its December and maybe, into ours as well. Decisions that Mrs. Gandhi's government has taken in the past ten months threaten to flesh out and consolidate a pattern of foreign policy which has been imminent since 1969 and particularly since 1971, after the conclusion of the Indo-Soviet treaty. This policy, with or without more formal arrangements, will make nonsense of non-alignment. It will make India a junior partner of the Soviet Union, accepting its view of the world, its division of friends

from enemies, and its reliance on the use of coercive power both at home and abroad. When that happens, India will have reached its December.

The framework and underlying assumptions of this policy are to be found in Mrs. Gandhi's speeches in Parliament during the defence and foreign policy debates (9, 19 July, 7 August), and were succinctly stated in her speech to the CHOGROM Conference on September 4th. This speech needs to be carefully read and analysed by all those who



follow foreign policy developments.

Mrs Gandhi's basic assumption is that 'the roots of the present world crisis must be sought in the resumption of a cold war adversary relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union' and in the economic strains resulting from the escalation of oil prices. Few would disagree with this statement. However, she then went on to say 'The international perspective has worsened both in global terms and in the *Asia-Pacific Region*' (my italics)

**T**he first part of this observation is somewhat trite, it refers to what has become almost a law of international life. By definition, as it were, both super powers have global interests and global reach, only the degree and their preferred instruments of power and influence differ. Strain and tension between them cannot but affect the international perspective globally. By recent historical fact, however, the past three years have witnessed a fresh eruption of events which have directly or indirectly involved the super powers, thus heightening the degree of global tension. The Khomemini revolution (1978), the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea (1978), the Chinese attack on Vietnam (1979), the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan (1979-80) and most recently the Iran-Iraq war (1980). Both the US and the USSR have strategic interests in these areas of conflict; but are more directly involved only in the Iranian and Afghan crises, though in very different ways.

Yet, in Mrs. Gandhi's strategic assessment, 'the cold war adversary relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union' has been resumed, generally in global terms, but specifically in 'the Asia-Pacific Region'. At first glance, this seems to be both puzzling and unwarranted, since neither super power was directly involved in the two crises of South East Asia. Mrs. Gandhi's next statement, however, helps to clarify the puzzle, and to reveal the thinking and the approach that underly her assessment. She is not talking about specific crisis situations but about the larger

process of alignment and re-alignment of world forces, which has been under way for at least twenty years, taking the Soviet withdrawal of aid, technicians and blueprints from China in 1960 as its starting point. What she is saying, is that this process has reached a culminating point, that alignments which will have global and long-term strategic implications, have begun to take form and shape.

**T**he crucial turning points, according to her, are, 'The alignment of China with the US in 1972' and its confirmation since 1979 'in a tri-continental "trilateralism"'. For those who don't remember, 1972 is memorable as the year in which Nixon visited China, ending a quarter century of hostility and confrontation. It was also the year in which the abnormal state of Sino-Japanese relations was rectified. Japan ended the state of war with China, extended recognition to Peking and acknowledged Taiwan to be an integral part of China. 1979 marked the belated exchange of diplomatic recognition between Washington and Peking and the formalization of the Sino-Soviet breach. It was also the year of the Chinese punitive attack on Vietnam.

Mrs Gandhi reads these developments as being determining and decisive, for 'alignment' denotes a strong and positive relationship. In the sense in which she uses it, 'alignment' must mean the obverse of 'non-alignment', signifying that the US and China did more than normalize relations between 1972 and 1979. they became allies and military partners. In 1979 another country (or grouping) joined them in what she calls a 'tri-continental tri-lateralism'. She does not identify which country she has in mind. Was it Japan? or Pakistan? (even though neither of them belong to a third continent). Or was she referring to NATO?

Very intriguing is Mrs. Gandhi's lapse of political memory on a development that future historians may identify as a major turning point in world affairs in the last quarter of the twentieth century, namely, the Vietnamese armed in-

tervention in Kampuchea and the establishment of the puppet Heng Samrin government. This took place in December 1978, shortly after the signing of the Vietnamese Soviet treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation. The announcement of the exchange of diplomatic relations between the US and China, came later, as did China's attack on Vietnam. For Mrs. Gandhi and her advisers, these are facts of little strategic consequence. Or, are they facts of such grave consequence that she felt compelled to overlook them, without even a passing mention?

**H**er selection of the events of 1972 and 1979 as turning points in the process of re-alignment, and the interpretation she puts on them, i.e., 'the alignment of China with the US' and the confirmation of a 'tri-continental trilateralism', has to be deliberate. They constitute the central plank around which she has constructed a whole framework of policy. Everything else flows from this centrality. These are the events which divide the good guys from the bad guys, and friends from potential enemies. These events, moreover, had 'badly shaken the Soviet psyche, as in the years after the October Revolution'. In her schema then, the Soviet Union is the good guy, and her concern for the Soviet psyche indicates the high degree of sympathy she has for the Soviet Union.

If the comparison with the situation that obtained after the October Revolution is not merely a literary flourish the ribbon on the package, as it were, then Mrs. Gandhi is saying that the new trilateral combine is out to encircle and perhaps carry out a concerted attack on the Soviet Union just as the six nation expedition did in 1918 in an attempt to undo the October Revolution. This is a grave conclusion, a serious charge against the trilateral combine. It accuses them of being aggressively and imperialistically anti-Soviet and also, in a sense, of being anti-historic, by trying to stem the tide of the progressive forces.

Once this basic assumption is made, everything else follows logically. The injured party is the pro-



gressive peace-loving Soviet Union and, 'In Soviet eyes, the dice was loaded against the Eastern bloc from the start' It is therefore on the defensive Consequently, 'Soviet policy has been reactive by attempting nuclear parity with the United States' It would not be incorrect to conclude that, for Mrs Gandhi, the Soviet Union bears no responsibility for initiating the new phase of super power rivalry It is in this reading of the situation that she advises that 'Every nation, even if non-aligned, must take note of the intentions and actions of Washington and Moscow and Beijing'

**F**or all nations, therefore, the new alliance structures of the international system manifest a return to the ideological and power polarization of the fifties but with one major difference — the defection of China to the side of the bad guys These are the poles within which, according to Mrs Gandhi, the non-aligned have to be non-aligned This means, in effect, that the non-aligned, to be on the right side of history, must oppose the bad guys and support the Soviet Union She would have them revert to the positions taken at Belgrade in 1961 (the struggle for peace and against war, rather than anti-colonialism) which came so close to splitting the non-aligned movement and rendered it impotent for so many years Talk of 'peace' in the present situation of crisis must mean that there is no ambiguity about who threatens the peace There is little doubt that in Mrs Gandhi's world view this role is assigned to the US and its new found ally, China

If any one has doubts about Mrs. Gandhi's fulsome defence of the Soviet Union, she proceeds to amplify it By bypassing the Geneva meeting and by leaving Moscow out of 'the Camp David process', the US has only 'exacerbated tensions' On Iran, it is 'the international media, so dominated by the interest-perceptions of the West' which failed to understand (or deliberately misinterpreted) 'the minds and hearts of the people of Iran' On Afghanistan, she said, 'The external facts [Soviet military intervention?] are known to all, but the truth is harder to grasp' The 'truth'

she is talking about is the 'outsiders attempts to exploit the rugged individuality of the Afghans for designs of global diplomacy'

This good chit for the Russians was underscored by reference to the Indian experience 'We', she said, 'have had some experience of such processes in our country' What does she mean? One can only presume that she is, once again, referring to the workings of the ubiquitous CIA and of the mysterious 'foreign hand' in India On the Indian Ocean too, while deploring 'great power presences' (please note the use of the plural) and the strengthening of bases in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, her special concern is with the American build up on Diego Garcia In South East Asia, where 'a strategic contest has been going on for years', it is the US who, she says, lost the opportunity after the Indo-China war came to an end in 1975 And her last word on this matter is to say that despite India's support for peace moves in that region, 'Vietnam must not be ostracized'

**A**dded up, statement by statement, and position by position, Mrs Gandhi's speech is a straight defence of the Soviet Union Never before in the 33 years since Independence, has an Indian prime minister acted as spokesman and interpreter in this fashion, for the strategic perceptions of the Soviet Union Mrs Gandhi's speech, moreover, had no 'Indian' content There was no suggestion that recent events in Kampuchea, Vietnam and Afghanistan had shaken the Indian psyche, no hint of an assessment that was uniquely India's own There was no amplification of her passing reference to an Indian 'position' on Afghanistan which she said was 'originally misunderstood' but was now 'gaining increasing adherence' Did she mean to imply that India does not have a strategic perspective different from that of the Soviet Union, but does have a different national role to play?

If Mrs Gandhi's CHOGROM speech was devoid of Indian content, her public statements and her speeches in Parliament are not They expand the Indian version of the

strategic assessments she outlined in that speech Her 'strategic perspective' she said, 'is to put the question of defence in broader perspective' since 'Every country's policies and decisions rest on its threat perceptions' Three themes dominate her national perspective One, that the threat to the country's security has visibly increased, two, that there is an arms build up in the region and India must be militarily prepared for 'any eventuality', three, that India is slowly being encircled by a US-China-Pak alliance, given the convergence of their policies in the regional crises

In short, Mrs Gandhi sees India faced with an immediate and growing threat of direct confrontation and perhaps war In her scenario, the Soviet Union despite its military presence in Afghanistan, is not seen as contributing to our deteriorating security environment Our smaller neighbours, however, all Davids to India's Goliath, have been warned off 'We were and shall continue to be firm if our national interest or security is in any way menaced' (July 19) The entering wedge of the threat is Pakistan, on whose back ride the United States and China ('We know from where we have been threatened in the past, but the dangers can emerge from other directions also') Consequently, there is a refusal to even sympathise with Pakistan, for whom the presence of Soviet troops across its border cannot but be a traumatic situation. Instead, there is a suggestion that Pakistan was a party to the 'outside interference' in Afghanistan which reactively brought in the Soviet military

**W**hat Mrs Gandhi hesitates to detail, is spelt out by others who share her strategic perspective For instance, T N Kaul, who is reputed to be one of her principal advisers on foreign policy, wrote 'It is unfortunate, but what is a small non-aligned country like Afghanistan to do when its neighbour (Pakistan) tries to interfere in its internal affairs through sabotage, subversion and military training and assistance to its insurgents?'

If Pakistan has played so mischievous a role in the events that



led to the Karmal/Soviet coup, India cannot but view with suspicion anything that Pakistan may do, i.e., acquire American arms, turn to the Islamic bloc, seek Chinese endorsement or propose some kind of mutual arms-reduction agreement with India. Mrs Gandhi, therefore, can only propose solutions which do not take account of Pakistani perceptions, and which it would be difficult for Pakistan to accept. Why, for instance, should Pakistan agree to talk to the Karmal regime which it does not recognize, at Indian instance, and on Indian soil? By making such proposals, she is, in effect, blocking all lines to Pakistan. What is even more disturbing is the way in which every occasion, whether it was Agha Shahi's banquet speech in Delhi, Pakistani press comments on the Moradabad and other riots, President Zia's mention of Kashmir as an unresolved problem in his address to the General Assembly, or rumours of Pakistani arms acquisitions etc., has been used to whip up a war psychosis in this country. Both she and her advisers would like us to believe that Pakistan is acting not on its own, but as proxy for the US.

**A**s T N Kaul argues it, the linkages are direct and evident. 'As for the rivalry between the two super powers and their allies, any attempt by one to threaten the security of the other, directly or through third countries, is bound to lead to counteraction by the other whose security is threatened. The unfortunate thing is that some non-aligned countries become willing tools of one super power in this game and thereby bring upon themselves the wrath of the other super power.' Although no names are mentioned, it is not difficult to guess which countries he has in mind. Pakistan is the 'willing tool' allowing China and the US to play their anti-Soviet game on Pakistan soil. Mrs Gandhi's basic framework is being reinforced and elaborated. The US is threatening the security of the USSR (the 'other') directly and through third countries (Pakistan and China?).

This also explains why the threat to India is as grave as it is made

out to be, and why there is presumed to be very little or no scope for the improvement of bilateral relations.

**A**lthough interventionist and aggressive designs are attributed to the United States, although Mrs Gandhi stated at her press conference (October 21) that the American 'tilt' against India was a continuing one, she has not closed avenues to the United States as she seems to have done with Pakistan. Indeed, both sides, despite the American 'tilt' and Mrs Gandhi's rhetoric, have taken therapeutic measures. The US Congress agreed to release enriched uranium for Tarapore. And, an Indian defence team has finalized the purchase of TOW missiles and mountain guns (which can be used only against America's presumptive allies, China and Pakistan) which the US had earlier refused to sell. Of course this country is heavily dependent on US development aid which must influence Mrs. Gandhi's policy. But the suggestion remains that she would like to find a *via media* with the US and that this is possible without violating the basic premise of her policy frame, or Soviet interests.

It is not surprising then, that Mrs Gandhi and her advisers call for a resumption of the interrupted process of detente. 'Events in Afghanistan' Mrs Gandhi said on July 19 'unpalatable to many as they are, are not sufficient reason to jettison detente.' She added a corollary to this in her CHOGROM speech, saying that detente 'must not be compartmentalized either geographically (in Europe) or functionally (arms limitation talks).'

When it comes to China, who, in Mrs Gandhi's strategic perspective, has 'aligned' itself with the US against the Soviet Union, her policy suddenly freezes into almost complete immobility. All her statements contain polite expressions about wanting to normalize relations, etc. But, on the whole, the bilateral relationship under her stewardship is singularly arid. There are some cultural exchanges, insignificant student, academic and professional exchanges, but there is no ongoing high level dialogue. It was Mrs Gandhi's men and the 'Soviet

lobby' that tried hard to first wreck the Vajpayee visit to China and to later make full capital of the coincidence of the Chinese attack on Vietnam.

It was these same people who were confidently silent when the return visit of the Chinese foreign minister was being discussed earlier this year. That visit has now been 'postponed'. The odds are it will not materialize, given the vast chasm between the strategic views of the two countries unless there is some concrete improvement in the bilateral relationship. At this level, as with Pakistan, avenues seem to be closed off, except at the periphery. Deng Xiaoping was roundly ticked off for giving a 'mischievous' interview to an Indian journalist on so important a matter as the border issue, even though what he said was, on the whole, constructive. A different approach to the problem is hinted at, but no initiatives are visible, and the stalemate continues.

When Mrs Gandhi says 'Vietnam must not be ostracized', when Narasimha Rao says that India is satisfied that the Heng Samrin government is in control of all Kampuchean territory except for a strip of border area, and has the support of the people of Kampuchea, when India joins the Soviet bloc countries and some others in calling on the UN to turn down Pol Pot's credentials, when Soviet sympathisers and her advisers, argue that Vietnam is bravely fighting India's battle, that it is an important strategic buffer against 'Chinese expansionism', Mrs Gandhi's government is saying quite openly that it regards China as both hostile and aggressive.

**F**inally, it is important to realize that all of Mrs Gandhi's stated positions, if adopted, would leave out and isolate China. For instance, any resumption of the process of detente (which China castigates roundly) would have to ignore China which has never been a party to this process. The political solution suggested by India in the wake of the Afghan crisis, did not include China. Regional arrangements as spelt out by Kaul (presumably with



Mrs. Gandhi's blessings) call for the conclusion of treaties of peace, friendship and cooperation — on the Soviet model — between Pakistan, Afghanistan and India (Iran was also mentioned earlier) extendable to other powers of the neighbourhood, but not to China (*Economic Times*, 7 April.)

The new importance being given to the non-aligned world also automatically exclude China which is not a member of that grouping. Even more, the choices as presented to the non-aligned by Mrs Gandhi would place them in opposition to China since she has concluded that China has aligned itself with the United States

In sum, Mrs Gandhi's policy, if it proceeds along these lines, would leave the Soviets in Afghanistan, bring Pakistan into treaty relationship with select neighbours and so into the Soviet orbit of influence, would make of the bilateral Sino-Indian relationship a meaningless minimal thing, would expand the Indo-US relationship, preferably from a position of strength after having sanitized Pakistan, would have India (together with Cuba?) lead the non-aligned on the basis of a natural affinity with the anti-imperialist and anti-war forces (i.e., the Soviets), and it would leave her free to deal with India's neighbours as she wishes, with Soviet blessing and support. It would, in short, complete the correspondence that already exists with the strategies, modalities and policies of the Soviet Union

The above analysis does not examine her claim that there is a national consensus on foreign policy. This is, in one sense, true. It is founded on the proved ability of the US to destabilise this country and this region, on a continuing fear of China, and on a deep distrust of Pakistan. These fears are based on the real experience of war with our two neighbours, unresolved disputes, and the opportunities this society provides all three for fishing in our troubled waters. But, in the past decade and more, these fears have been pampered and fed by the Soviet lobby, influential hawks, 'committed' academics and

journalists, and even by Mrs Gandhi herself. Of late, even foreign policy debates in Parliament have been 'managed'. Members of Parliament belonging to the ruling party have echoed and orchestrated Mrs Gandhi's themes. And Narasimha Rao took the unusual step of consulting with opposition parties so that, as one opposition party member put it, China (the occasion was the Deng interview) would not have the satisfaction of knowing it could divide Parliament on Sino-Indian issues. Unfortunately, this has stifled the incipient debate and left the claim to a national consensus untested.

If there is national consensus, it must also rest on the assumption that India is not allied with any one country, that it remains non-aligned and independent. If this assumption is not seen to hold, the consensus will break down. Only another war, or a major crisis, in which the US, China, and Pakistan are undisputably arraigned against this country, would permit the growth of a new consensus on a policy of open alignment with the Soviet Union. This would explain why Mrs Gandhi is coy and discreet about our relationship with the Soviet Union, and the Indo-Soviet treaty.

Indeed, her constant refrain is that she is neither pro-Soviet nor pro-America, nor pro-any other country, she is pro-India. In this case, the lady does seem to be protesting too much, for all evidence points to the fact that she is riding in tandem with the Soviet Union, and that she began to do so in the years just prior to the signing of the Indo-Soviet treaty. Looking back, 1969 seems to have been the crucial year, policies, postures and decisions taken in that year led, quite inevitably, to the Indo-Soviet treaty of 1971.

Every country nurtures certain mythologies which condition the way in which it views, interprets and accepts political decisions. An important part of the mythology current in this country is that the Soviets have always stood by India in times of crisis. This is, of course, partly true, but it is not the entire

story. Few remember that in the years between 1960 and 1971 Soviet support for India was neither spontaneous nor unambiguous. The problem was China. So long as there was the possibility of a Sino-Soviet rapprochement or even of a Sino-Indian understanding, Soviet policy tended to blow hot and cold.

On October 20, 1962, for example, within hours of the Chinese attack, Khrushchov reversed earlier support for India. He told Nehru that to fight over the border issue would be 'a very dangerous path' and advised him to accept the Chinese proposals for negotiations and talks. Four days later (when China renewed this proposal) a *Pravda* article supported the Chinese view on the status of the McMahon line. 'The notorious "McMahon line"' it said '*which was never recognized by China*, was foisted on the Chinese and Indian people' (my italics). About the same time, in the midst of the war, the delivery of the promised MIG fighters was also delayed.

Clearly, as Nehru understood, the Soviets were trying to persuade China to support them during the Cuban crisis. The price the Soviets were prepared to pay was India. It was only when the Chinese did not respond that the Soviet Union reverted to supporting India. It still, however, kept its options open. Soviet maps, which Khrushchov told the UN in 1964, depicted 'historically determined borders' that should not be disturbed, showed both the disputed Aksai Chin and McMahon Line areas as Chinese territory. This position remained unchanged until 1978 when the McMahon Line began to be shown as a firm border. Aksai Chin is still shown as part of China.

In the late 1960s, the Soviets showed the same ambivalence over the issue of Kashmir when it tried to befriend Pakistan. In early 1965 (as Pakistan began to open up to China) Ayub was invited to Moscow. The explanation given to a worried India was that it would be advantageous to India if the Soviets could wean Pakistan away from both the US and China. In the years after Tashkent, Moscow mov-



ed away from its recognition of Kashmir as an integral part of India, to calling it a 'problem' which should be resolved by the two countries concerned. India could no longer have the confidence that the Soviets would use the veto on India's behalf as it had done in the past. And, finally, in 1968 the Soviets without informing India, supplied Pakistan with arms that included helicopters, MIGs and missiles. Around the same time, the Soviet assessment of India also changed: it was non-aligned but not 'progressive' as were the UAR, Algeria, Syria, Burma, Mali, etc. All the signs were that India had fallen in the Soviet estimation.

**T**he Soviet reason for befriending Pakistan and its coolness towards India soon became clear. In September 1978, a few days after Mrs. Gandhi told the Foreign Correspondents Association that she was prepared to resume a dialogue with China, Firyubin, the influential Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister complained that India was not following a consistent policy towards China. In short he was indicating that Soviet support for India on Kashmir and the Sino-Indian border issue, would depend on the degree to which India shared its view of China.

By 1969 the Sino-Soviet breach had reached a new stage. The despatch of Soviet troops to Czechoslovakia in May 1968 and the Brezhnev doctrine of limited sovereignty had met with sharp Chinese responses. In the Chinese view the Soviet Union had become an expansionist, militaristic, social-imperialist power. Major clashes along the Sino-Soviet border that year, at Ussuri in the east and Sinkiang in the west, only underlined the intensity of their mutual hostility. From then on the US emerged as the 'balancer' in this enlarging hostile relationship. As China and the US inched towards a rapprochement, the Soviets began to look around for counterbalancing friends and allies.

In 1968-69 Mrs. Gandhi was aware that India was losing diplomatic manoeuvrability, and was, understandably, uneasy about the

new Soviet friendship for Pakistan. Her dominant response was to placate the Soviet Union. The Parliament was persuaded not to 'condemn' Soviet arms supplies to Pakistan; she abstained from 'condemning' Soviet action in Czechoslovakia at the UN, and when the Sino-Soviet border war broke out, the Indian Foreign Minister supported the Soviet position in Parliament.

At home, she assumed a radical and progressive stance, surrounding herself with 'leftist' advisers. And, when she split the Congress Party in 1969, she presented it as a conflict between the progressive and the reactionary forces within the party. Bank nationalization became the symbol, bringing her the support of the communists, the PSP, and the pro-left elements of the SSP. Even *Pravda* got into the act, hailing her as a great and progressive leader. Indo-Soviet relations had moved a long way away from the 'low' of 1968. In 1969 the Soviets could propose a bilateral treaty with India, and a regional cooperation arrangement between Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

**A**ll the evidence suggests that Moscow had acquired a new confidence in India. Its immediate strategic concern after 1969 was China. Soviet pronounced policy presented that country as the principal threat to the countries of Asia. And Brezhnev proposed a collective security system that was intended to 'contain' China. The only price that the Soviet Union could have demanded from India, was no real normalization with China. The question is, did Mrs. Gandhi agree to pay that price? Again, circumstantial evidence would suggest that she did. As early as September 1968 and again in January 1969, Mrs. Gandhi had promised a more flexible policy and had expressed a desire to normalize relations with China to discuss the border issue without any preconditions.

Whether she was serious or was using the China 'card' to pressurise the Soviets is not altogether clear. But, in addition to supporting the Soviet Union in its territorial dispute with China, Mrs. Gandhi in her

mid-year visit to Japan and Indonesia, discussed the Asian Collective Security system as one that was intended to restrain China in Asia. The next year when the episode of the Mao hand shake took place, many senior bureaucrats and China watchers read it as a serious gesture of reconciliation. Mrs. Gandhi did not, she gently rebuffed the gesture by asking for a written message, and the process of normalization was once again stalled.

The events of 1971 — the Bangladesh crisis, China's support for the unity of Pakistan and its bitter denunciation of India, the secret Kissinger visit to Beijing from Pakistani soil, the initial American refusal to embargo arms sales to Pakistan and its infamous 'tilt' against India, are too well remembered to need reiteration. Taken together, they presented India with a grave security problem and helped create an atmosphere in which a two or three pronged threat to this country seemed credible. These events also confirmed the current mythology on who were India's friends, and who were not, and united the nation behind Mrs. Gandhi for the liberation of Bangladesh. It was in that highly charged atmosphere that the Indo-Soviet treaty was signed and presented to the country as a diplomatic feat. And so it seemed to be for it promised to off-set both the US and China. Few looked beyond the immediate pressing reasons — the need to counter both China and the US — to assess the long term significance of the 20 year treaty. Moreover, it had been kept a deep and successful secret, and only a handful of Mrs. Gandhi's close confidantes — D.P. Dhar, T.N. Kaul, P.N. Haksar, Dinesh Singh, Swaran Singh and her 'kitchen cabinet', perhaps — knew it was in the offing.

**S**ince then, Mrs. Gandhi has consistently played down the treaty — though it was the first such entered into by India in the twenty four years of its existence — and has dismissed any suggestion that it had military implications, or that it tied India in a number of ways to the Soviet Union. Consequently, few in this country have examined this treaty seriously, or regarded it as a treaty of alliance and a political



compact, even though the Soviets did, at first, so present the treaty

**I**t is, of course, possible that Mrs Gandhi did not intend to take the treaty as an alliance arrangement. Certain evidence, however, points to the opposite conclusion — the reluctance to open a serious dialogue with China (despite the return of the Indian Ambassador in 1975), the strains in the Indo-US relationship, and the increasing inflexibility of Indian foreign policy. A possible explanation is to be found in a note sent by D P Dhar, the then Chairman of the Planning Commission, to all chief ministers in September 1973. The relevant portions of this note read 'We must look at the whole broad spectrum of international relationships to identify our foes and our friends. Is a policy of detente with everyone in our national interest? *It would, on the other hand appear that for years to come the USA will remain our most powerful enemy.* Without sacrificing *operational flexibility* this basic understanding of international forces should be kept in view by the policy makers' (Italics mine). In the document as available, there is no mention of China, although the Nixon visit of 1972 to that country had taken place. There is, however, an interesting note on appropriate domestic policy. Dhar calls for 're-furbishing the progressive leftward orientation of party policy and programmes' and for 'a broad framework of understanding with the CPI'.

D P Dhar was no ordinary politician. He was a trusted adviser and friend to the Prime Minister. It is exceedingly doubtful if such a note could have been so widely circulated without Mrs Gandhi's prior approval. Although Dhar made no mention of the treaty, the strategy he outlined did not differ in its basic essentials from that of the Soviets. It is also interesting that Dhar talked of 'operational flexibility' which means tactical responses that do not alter the broad strategy.

If Dhar's advice to 'policy makers' indicates that Mrs Gandhi and the Soviet leaders shared what Kosygin described in 1979 as 'the community of purpose in the struggle for peace and against aggression and oppres-

sion', then the treaty demands re-examination. Only such a community of purpose could satisfactorily explain the conceptual framework that was outlined in Mrs Gandhi's CHOGROM speech, and the constraints within which Indian policy, is being conducted.

**L**et me indicate how this treaty could constrain Mrs Gandhi. Firstly, it could prevent her from equating the Soviet Union with the United States in its role as a super power. This is exactly what Mrs Gandhi has done by identifying the US as aggressive and interventionist and the USSR, despite its rapidly growing power, as threatened and defensive. The first four articles of the treaty, incidentally, commit both to 'strengthen peace, condemn colonialism and racialism', India, to support the Soviet 'peace policy' and the USSR to uphold Indian non-alignment. This formulation could place severe limits on India's interpretation of what constitutes a 'peace policy' or even nonalignment if it binds India to regard Soviet policy as a 'peace policy'.

Secondly, it could prevent her from fully normalizing relations with China so long as that country considers the Soviet Union to be a social-imperialist and hegemonic power, and a strategic enemy. Article 10 of the treaty enjoins that both parties 'shall not undertake any commitment, open or secret, towards one or more States incompatible with the treaty', and can be read as being mandatory. Can this mean that a compromise resolution of the Sino-Indian border issue, or a treaty of peace and non-aggression, would be considered as being 'incompatible with the treaty'?

Thirdly, the treaty demands that both parties will 'refrain from giving any assistance to any third party taking part in an armed conflict with the other party'. Is Pakistan a 'third party' taking part in 'an armed conflict' with the Soviet Union? Do the US, China, Iran, the Afghan rebels, etc., also fall into this category? And what does 'any assistance' mean? Could it cover Indian sympathy and diplomatic support for Pakistan (or the Afghan rebels)? Does this provision

also apply to the situation in Kampuchea and Vietnam? In short, does this clause constrain India from taking an independent or non-aligned position in any crisis involving the Soviet Union and its allies?

Lastly, if the Soviet Union invoked this treaty (as we did soon after it was signed) in relation to the Afghan and Kampuchean crises the thrust of Mrs Gandhi's policies reflects the very narrow parameters within which India can act if the treaty is not to be violated. If this is so, then all low level moves in the Sino-Indian relationship are fated to be no more than exercises in what D P Dhar termed 'operational flexibility' they cannot be serious moves towards genuine normalization. Taken as a conceptual whole, Mrs Gandhi's CHOGROM speech as well as her policies, do not transgress what could be construed as constituting an Indo-Soviet 'community of purpose'.

**S**ince the treaty was signed six years before Mrs. Gandhi was voted out of power, it would be instructive to know how the Janata Government dealt with this treaty. Did Morarji Desai, Vajpayee and Jagjivan Ram, who was Defence Minister in Mrs. Gandhi's Government, know how Mrs Gandhi regarded this treaty? Did the Janata policy of 'genuine' nonalignment reflect a decision to interpret the treaty as narrowly as was consonant with Indian interests? Indo-Soviet friendship, for instance, remained the corner stone of Janata foreign policy even as it tried to separate its 'bilateral relations with China as well as its responses to the Kampuchean-Vietnamese events from that relationship. Is this what made the Soviets so suspicious of Vajpayee's Beijing visit? We have only to recall the vehement opposition of the Soviet lobby to this visit, and Kosygin's angry denunciation of China during his visit of March 1979, to speculate that the Soviets were deeply worried lest the Janata government would keep the treaty but throw out the 'community of purpose' on China.

But, it must be recognized that for any Indian government, a treaty which promises weapons and mili-



tary supplies, which promises to support India on Kashmir and other disputes with Pakistan, which promises full support to India in case of a Chinese attack, and which permits India to reshape the political map of South Asia, is undoubtedly a treaty that cannot be scrapped lightly, even though the price paid is high, particularly when our grave problems with our neighbours remain unresolved.

Mrs. Gandhi knows this, and the record of the Janata Government shows how difficult it would be for any Indian government to do so. The most that can be done, without a rupture of the relationship as happened in the case of Egypt, is to put a minimal interpretation on this treaty so that areas of national, bi-lateral and non-aligned interest can be enlarged and separated from the demands of Soviet national strategy towards the United States and, in particular, China. This, it seems, is what the Janata tried to do, with some success. But this is the process that Mrs. Gandhi seems to be reversing, both conceptually and in policy.

**T**here is real danger that Mrs. Gandhi's schema may unfold to become a self-fulfilling prophesy which will bring confrontation and war to India. Already her policy has alienated us from all our neighbours, from the ASEAN countries and Japan, and from the bulk of the non-aligned and third world countries. There was a period of time when, at home and abroad, it was felt that Mrs. Gandhi did not share the Soviet view of the world, or condone Soviet actions, that she would provide leadership and guidance to the non-aligned, that she would see things from a contemporary Indian perspective. As the months go by, this hope is dying out, and with it comes a new appraisal of her policy.

For us, at home, there is a domestic dimension to this policy which threatens to once again undermine our chosen open democratic system. Since coming to power, Mrs. Gandhi's explanations of domestic problems — from Assam through Moradabad to the price rise — hint at the conspiratorial workings of a

'foreign hand' behind the scenes. Sometimes she is more explicit. On August 7, speaking in the Rajya Sabha, she said that 'some people had received training and arms from China and there was reason to suspect that they were getting involved in the incidents on India's borders'. The suggestion that CIA-Maoist-Pak agents were active in Assam has been made by many responsible members of her government. It should not be necessary to point out that the foreign agents she hints at belong to those countries which she perceives as threatening Indian security.

**I**f Mrs. Gandhi had stopped here, one could have ignored her tendency to take a conspiratorial view of things. But she did not. Her July 19 speech in the Lok Sabha contained a not so veiled suggestion that the opposition was not entirely national in its approach to foreign policy issues. In the context of India's relations with China and Pakistan, she said 'Mr Nixon's visit to China and the USA's change of attitude was like a magic wand which transformed Vajpayee and many others also'. The picture is now complete: the external threat not only has domestic ramifications in the shape of 'the foreign hand', it also has a putative 'lobby' within the opposition. For any nationalist Indian, the picture she draws is disquieting in both its external and domestic implications.

If Mrs. Gandhi's strategy does contribute to a formalization of the very alignments she deplors, a sharp deterioration of our relations with Pakistan, China and the US (possibly in that order) is inevitable, and with it the possibility of the imposition of severe domestic constraints. This country will then be tied inextricably to the Soviet Union. That, as I said at the beginning, will mark our December. The search for an alternative foreign policy more in keeping with international realities, Indian interests and the Indian psyche, will have to start with a questioning of all of Mrs. Gandhi's basic assumptions and with a re-examination of the Indo-Soviet treaty before it is too late to shake off its constraining yoke.



# Global perspective

RAJNI KOTHARI

A mood of concern, perplexity and confusion has descended on the world scene. This is understandable. For, we live in a period of fundamental transition. The post-war world, which was characterized by recovery from the ravages of economic depression, war, fascism and colonialism on the one hand and renewed competition for global power on the other, had achieved a measure of stability through an essentially managerial response to a new situation. The chief architects of the managerial response were the two super powers with their rival systems of alliances and a doctrine

of deterrence which, as the dangers of such a doctrine became clear, was fortunately restrained by a period of detente and a complicated balancing of world power.

Other expressions of the managerial response included a modicum of development assistance for the countries most affected by centuries of colonialism, and a modest effort at creating an institutional framework of conciliation, debate, relief and welfare under the United Nations system. This managerial response was by no means satisfactory, as it ignored basic



issues of structural change and cultural diversity, but it did work for a time in preventing sources of conflict and tension from turning into major catastrophes.

**T**his system is no longer working. We are already in the throes of a growing breakdown of this system. It is breaking down not simply in respect of larger structural and cultural issues that are engaging sensitive minds everywhere but even in respect of managerial efficiency, sustenance of growth rates and provision of certain minima of human survival, and maintenance of a framework of peace and security. The world economy has already entered a period of stagnation and paralysis, the old engines of growth in the industrialized world seem to have reached their limits, the energy crisis is taking a heavy toll everywhere, and the simultaneous onslaught of unemployment and inflation is fast eroding the framework of economic stability that had been constructed following Bretton Woods. The assumptions on which the international monetary system had rested — the linkage with the dollar, fixed exchange rates etc — have all been undermined and nothing really has taken their place. Nor is there any significant theoretical basis for constructing an alternative system. All that we have witnessed is the demise of the old international economic order.

Major powers like the United States are fast losing in influence partly due to decline in their economic influence in the world, partly due to an incapacity to adjust to new political realities, and partly independently of both these factors including major strains in the erstwhile western alliance under the growing pressure of larger world forces. There is obvious danger when major centres of technological and military might like the United States find themselves unable to cope with a new situation as they are likely to fall prey to irrational responses unless new and saner forces can inject a large measure of restraint and statesmanship.

Meanwhile, the socialist world is also in a state of flux partly as a result of a fast changing world eco-

nomic and political situation which has cast a shadow on the framework of detente and has led to a new resumption of super-power rivalry, but partly also as a result in their case too of older assumptions not working (such as the prognosis of imperialism and its nemesis, the theory of a world proletariat and the tactical line on co-existence). Alongside, new forms of nationalism are intervening at various points in the old edifice and new and untidy alignments in regional contexts are undermining the cohesion of the socialist world and its special relationship with the ex-colonial countries. The earlier convergence of interest between the socialist countries (especially the Soviet Union) and the Third World is giving place to opportunistic alignments which are no longer based on any clear principle or analysis of world history.

**I**n the Third World itself there are a whole set of disturbing signs. While there has taken place a considerable rise in both consciousness of political and economic power and actual assertion thereof, and while there is little doubt that the new engines of growth and dynamism must come from the newly industrializing countries of the Third World and from the enormous resource that the poor of the world must provide (both as productive forces and as new markets), the countries of the Third World are also caught up in deep conflicts both at home and abroad. They are unable to any longer work unitedly (except in verbal confrontations in the U.N.) and, bewitched as they are by outworn assumptions about economic planning, technological transfers and the model of a modern technocratic State which they seem unable to control and which tends to either perpetuate older forms of neocolonialism or foster new ones, the elites of the Third World are fast losing their leverage in world affairs. Late-comers in both the game of world politics and in the processes of modernization and industrialization, these elites seem to view these matters in old power terms whereas the real issues are increasingly of a different order. There is need to think of both development and power anew but this is not forthcoming.

The Non-aligned World, the Group of 77, the concept of collective self-reliance and the call of a new international economic order all seem to be in a jam — useful perhaps in putting up the necessary resistance to western domination but insufficient bases for preparing the countries of the Third World to deal with their own problems either jointly or severally. They do not seem to agree on even setting up a powerful Secretariat or sponsor a major research and information system which can match with the efforts of the OECD group of countries. Prisoner of its own rhetoric, which more often than not reflects more its powerlessness than its power, and still immersed in archaic and often reactionary structures at home, the Third World presents a picture of growing fragmentation and chaos. This is hardly a condition in which to join the North-South dialogue based on any confidence of one's own position of strength. No wonder that the dialogue too has become an empty ritual and has in effect all but collapsed.

**S**uch a picture of fragmentation all around in which the super powers have lost their capacity to provide any framework of stability and security, the old systems of alliance are disintegrating, and new movements for structural change in the world have failed to make any headway is further compounded by an increase in the spate of violence both domestically and internationally, and a fast spreading virus of militarization in all regions of the world for which some powerful countries of the North (like France) are providing the fuel and the fodder. Add to this a much more heightened competition for scarce resources, a growing depletion of the natural environment and the protective cover of the biosphere in the craze for technological power often wholly unrelated to real needs of the people, and, consequent upon all this, a desperate struggle for human survival and sanctity of life and its values at all levels of the globe.

Unless major infusions of both knowledge and statesmanship intervene in the process, we are likely to witness a series of localised and not



so localised wars, unexpected mutations in power relations among major States for which we may be wholly unprepared, large and uncontrolled movements of millions of people across State boundaries, and domestic strife and economic collapse challenging the stability of regimes and producing a breakdown of civil society. Failure to manage these accumulating sources of tension and intervene in them through necessary structural and institutional changes may well lead us without much forewarning to a psychic condition which may produce the ultimate nemesis of a nuclear war.

Now, such a prognosis of possibilities of fragmentation, chaos and probable catastrophe is not a result of some evil forces working themselves out along some inexorable logic of unfoldment or of the doings of some mad or stupid men in power. If it were so we could all either go home and pray, or join politics and dislodge the mad and stupid men from power. On the contrary, the reasons for such a state of affairs are to be found in some very positive and historically inevitable forces of change — the rise of consciousness of their rights by millions of hitherto submerged people everywhere, the rise of Third World societies to their rightful place in the global framework of power and position, the radical shifts in the global constellation of power and in the demand for world resources and for a major redistribution of economic power, major changes in the world economy, the re-emergence and re-vitalization of major world civilizations and world religions and their assertion of alternative perspectives on fundamental issues facing the world.

Major changes in values, perceptions and cosmologies are in the offing in the wake of new forms of consciousness, new explosions of knowledge, and new awareness that the old ways will not do and that there is need to find new answers, produce new skills and generate new forms of knowledge to deal with a new human problematique — in a way to restore vision and perspective but to do so by taking cognizance of new secular and spiritual forces at work. The long period

of decline of institutional capabilities has also been one of new expressions of the human spirit.

It is the huge and widening gap between these new mutations and the old and obsolete institutional mechanisms of deliberation and decision-making that continue to persist at both national and international levels that accounts for the present drift. It is this birth of the new in the confines of the old that lies behind the conflicts and confrontations we are witnessing, many though not all of them are inherent in a process of rebirth and rejuvenation. But the prevailing systems of management are unable to fathom the forces that are at work and provide the necessary restructuring of institutional, technological and power relationships. Governments and political party machines are unable any longer to aggregate interests, hold allegiances and mediate between contending forces. The intrusion of the mass media and the virtual transfer of major political functions to bureaucratic and technocratic structures everywhere have transformed the nature of the State in both liberal and socialist societies.

There is then a growing alienation between the awakened masses at the bottom and the modes of conflict resolution that are still highly centralized. Similarly, the relationship between choices of technology and processes of social and political transformation are increasingly at odds, producing further alienation. And, above all, the universities, scientific bodies, research institutions and specialized journals and expert meetings are all lagging far behind in coming to grips with the new realities. Their place seems to be taken by the purveyors of capsuled knowledge — the media, the salesmen, the astrologers, the gurus — who are of course unable to provide new answers but who have a mesmeric effect in a world of fast changes and increasing insecurities.

The same is the case with planning bodies and the economic pundits, the management specialists and the disseminators of so-called innovations and inventions. The

brightest minds in economics and other social sciences prefer to deal with little theoretical embellishments rather than with major problems facing the human race. The striking contrast that has produced a non-functioning structure of governance and decision-making everywhere is above all to be traced to this deep schism between the world of knowledge and the world of reality, continuous and even exponential expansion of knowledge does not seem to increase the capability to deal with real problems. This is the biggest and sharpest alienation of all and one with which the intelligentsia should be most concerned.

Such concern is sadly lacking at the present time. As we enter a highly competitive and fragile world struggling for its very survival, we need new and valid ideas and skills for dealing with the unprecedented complexity and fragility of the human condition. Contemporary paradigms of thought and models of managing social and economic affairs are out of tune with the enormous pace of technological changes and their hazardous new directions, whether this be in strategic doctrines and weaponry or in the rise of a new corporatism with a global sweep or in the exploitation of the planet and the seas and the vast riches that lie hidden underneath — we do not yet know for better or for worse.

Nor have we yet really come to grips with the deeper causes of absolute poverty and the structural and cultural correlates of it, of how precisely to break the patterns of powerlessness that keep millions and millions of people in a state of dependence and bondage despite all the development decades that we have had and on which our economic pundits and a large array of international bodies have been exercised.

Above all, we need to patiently learn how to manage large-scale transformations at local, regional and global levels without endangering human survival, how to propel new engines of growth in the Third World on the basis of new institution-building and by drawing upon historical and cultural resources of



these regions, how to generate the necessary momentum of science and technology but learn to control the same and hold it from moving us towards unanticipated disasters

We need to learn to establish the centrality of people in all such changes and pay due regard to their own traditions, their organisational skills and rationality, and their considerable technological capabilities and their deeply laid paradigms of science and creativity which have lately been submerged under the un-linear march of modernity and development models but which are still very much alive. It is imperative that we tap and utilise the highly varied and shrewd resources and skills of our peoples in seeking answers to the problems they face. Unless the rural poor are themselves enabled to put their own native energies and age-old abilities and accumulated wisdom to use, the chances of our ever removing the scourge of poverty are dim indeed.

Prevailing models of development have failed us in all these respects and, while to an extent this is a result of incompetent governments, it is also and more basically due to false theories and faulty assumptions on the relationship between man, society and nature, and even more due to the fragmentation of knowledge which has made the output of our academia irrelevant to the problems facing men of action. These problems are highly complex and interrelated while the growth of knowledge tends to be highly specialized, fragmented and alienated from basic thrusts and stirrings of peoples and societies. There has thus taken place a steady growth of incapacities in various sectors at the same time as the investment in various fields of knowledge and various departments of government and R & D establishments has gone up in very large doses.

Internationally, the old frameworks have become wholly dated. As we move into an age when the super powers will be unable to stem or control international conflicts and wars and the United Nations itself may be paralysed by the growing conflict between the North and

the South, the East and the West and within each of these world segments, the states systems as it is presently constructed will be unable to provide peace and security and all progress on disarmament and human rights is likely to come to a standstill if not reversed.

Similarly, as the international economic system becomes even more precarious and further strains national and local resources and institutions, and as old engines of growth and dynamism begin to give way, there will be need to pay special attention to restructuring the world economy, generate new engines of growth in the newly industrializing countries by drawing upon the numerous resources of their vast populations and their rich and ancient civilizations and scientific traditions.

The problems are fundamentally international and global in both respects. It would not do any more to merely pursue the diplomacy of bilateral relations or of cleverly steering clear of any criticism of some super power. Nor will it do for analysts of international affairs to operate in the frameworks set by either the first or the second cold war, or by still narrower frameworks of regional strategic balances and military preparedness for 'dealing with any eventuality' which is the surest way of actualizing the presumed 'eventuality' and strengthening the hands of politicians seeking escape mechanisms to cover up their domestic failings.

This is not to say that problems of power balances ought not to receive major attention by both analysts and policy-makers. They indeed should receive attention. But even there the need is to recognize the changing contours of competition and conflict in the emerging constellation of power. Of immediate relevance for us here is the fast changing regional scene in Asia on which policy-makers and analysts haven't even begun to give serious thought. Massive dislocations are taking place as a result of large-scale population movements caused either by wars or by economic inducements (e.g., from West Asia).

Then there is the pattern of flow of Arab funds to Asia. Here, the striking fact is that of the small proportion of Arab money flowing into the developing countries (the bulk still goes to the developed world) a large part is going to the already developed part of Asia, most notably to Singapore, thus further enlarging the disparities in the region. The relevant point here is not just the attitudes of Arab leaders (among whom too there are important differences and cleavages to draw on) but also the fact that with all the brave talk of 'collective self-reliance' we in the developing world have not even developed the instrumentalities for changing such a pattern of flow of funds. The banking system is not geared to the task, the trade mechanisms are highly underdeveloped, the economic performance of neighbouring countries remains highly uneven with little effort at pooling resources and capabilities which often happen to be complementary (as in the South Asian region) while the political thrust of the existing States system in the region is not directed towards this end.

India itself presents the spectacle of extreme dualism. One large part of it belongs to the lowest tier of the world economic structure. But another part of it is highly developed industrially and technologically as well as in respect of human skills and institutional capabilities. And yet the country refuses to play any major regional role in correcting existing imbalances and inadequacies and reaping the benefits of such a role for improving economic performance at home. Is this a result of our being a dependent capitalist State? Is it because we are too closely tied to the Soviet Union and indirectly to the global military and strategic balance? Or is it simply that we are unable to look beyond our own immediate sub-region with its artificially simulated atmosphere of suspicion and hostility?

Many other major currents are likely to sweep across Asia. A yen-fuelled economy is taking place in large parts of the region and Japan will emerge as an economic power



with both regional and global ambitions. At the same time the pattern of utilisation of the 'Asia dollars', which constitutes a very large reservoir of investible funds, remains highly secretive, with the overseas Chinese playing a major role in it. In the years to come this may well turn out to be an important factor in regional economic relations.

The opening up of China has meant that all major powers and international financial institutions will have to accommodate China's claims to economic aid and technical assistance, with major consequences for other developing countries in Asia (and elsewhere). Meanwhile, the countries of Southeast Asia feel threatened by the emerging economic and technological might of China. One result of this is that countries like the Philippines are going in for heavy industrialization with a view to reducing their vulnerability to China. Others like Singapore are seeking to establish their own separate identity and are found to restrict the traditional role that Chinese language has played. Malaysia is doing the same with its policy of Malaysianization, and others like Indonesia are becoming prepared further to opening their economies and strategic establishments to the multinationals and to American power.

What will all this do to ethnic tensions and power relations in this highly complex and increasingly militarized region which is also subject to economic recession and the social convulsions of earlier economic development? In our short-sighted preoccupation with the legacy of the 1962 war and spurred by powerful lobbies at work, we seem to deny ourselves the opportunity of playing our role in shaping these various currents by opening a dialogue with China and responding to the gestures made by Japan and the ASEAN bloc of countries. Nearer home, we seem to be giving up our natural role in evolving a common South Asian posture through careful diplomacy of assuaging the fears of our neighbours and a strategy of co-operation towards a shared economic future.

Both regionally and globally, then, the choices facing us — and others like us — will be of quite a different order of magnitudes than the ones we have been used to in the past. At one level these choices will still be by reference to the changing constellation of power and force and influence. But this is only one level and by no means the most important one. For, as we move into the eighties and beyond, we will be face to face with deeper issues of survival at individual, group and economic levels. What we are likely to face in the eighties is a crisis in the very nature of the State as we have known it, a crisis in the States system that has sustained the prevailing conception of the State and its relation to society, a crisis in the institutional structure of the world economy and the high technology that has sustained it despite differences in economic ideologies.

Thinking on international relations and strategic matters will have increasingly to take into account the need to relate and balance the location and distribution of population and resources, the nature of technology and the need for employment, the quantum and types of energy and standards of consumption, and above all the old liberal conception of democratic participation and the increasing need to control complex human systems. All these dimensions cut across the traditional States system without necessarily undermining the cultural and psychological functions performed by nation States and sub-national units. To the extent that analysts and statesmen will be able to propose and devise appropriate mechanisms at regional and global levels dealing with long-term issues, the sources of conflict will be contained and made manageable. To the extent that they continue to think along narrow time horizons and confine themselves to the so-called 'national interest' dimension, or at best to *ad hoc* management of specific symptoms of conflicts as they arise, the same sources of conflict will become sharper, converge into a common pattern of deterioration in various regions and confrontation among them, and ultimately produce some major holocaust.



# Books

**THE REGIONAL IMPERATIVE: U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Asian States** by Lloyd I Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and others New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 1980

40 BY an Act of the U S Congress, the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee created a commission in 1973 on the Organisation of the Government for the Conduct of Foreign Policy. The commission in true American fashion set in motion 24 studies by academic and other foreign policy and world politics experts in a marathon attempt to modify and improve the system for the formulation and implementation of US foreign policy. The 24 volumes came out bear-

ing the imprint of unimpeachable knowledge and intellectual authority. Their impact on the making and implementing of American foreign policy, however, remained rather doubtful. At any rate, Jimmy Carter's handling of international affairs proved to be worse than Nixon's and Ford's.

The Rudolph's are among the better known US specialists on South Asia. They were asked to prepare a study responsive to one of the objectives of the commission's programme to evaluate the 'capacity of the United States to maintain coordination between a large number of policies impinging on a . . . region'. The result is *The Regional Imperative* — a critical evaluation of the *mechanism* of the making



of several important foreign policy decisions relating to the countries of South Asia — India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in particular. The Rudolphs enlisted the cooperation of several South Asia scholars. Their volume was published in the US in 1975. The one under review is a reprint.

The five years have not dated this volume. On the contrary, the thrusts of US diplomacy in South Asia in 1980 have restored its relevance. The 100-page evaluative criticism by Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph of US handling of the events leading to the Bangladesh war of 1971 and of the war itself still compels attention, if one can get out the arcane academic language deployed on some of the pages (not all). For, what the Rudolphs have shown with painstaking industry and patience is what many of us have been saying all the time: the United States is so completely wedded to globalism that it just cannot pursue a regional foreign policy except, to some extent, in Latin America.

A great deal of the Rudolph's essay is concerned with the abrupt and arbitrary decision of Richard Nixon in 1971 to handle South Asian diplomacy himself, with the help of his national security adviser, Henry K. Kissinger. The presidential takeover of foreign policy decision-making left the State Department out in the cold, the mechanism of normal diplomacy was not only bypassed but to a large extent alienated. The Rudolphs and several other contributors to the volume would rather have the State handle regional foreign policy problems under direct presidential guidance and instruction. This, however, is a problem so peculiarly American that we can only nod in approval of many of the points made in this study arguing against White House handling of foreign policy issues.

The criticism, however, has had little impact on the foreign policy making apparatus in the US. For Jimmy Carter too collapsed to the temptation to take over foreign policy, with the help of his national security adviser, from the Secretary of State; the result was the resignation of Cyrus Vance over the ill-fated commando raid on Iran. Every American President sees himself as leader of the free world, the maker and unmaker of war and peace. It is only natural that every American President should wish to excel in foreign policy whether or not he has the talent or taste for it. The National Security Adviser has far outstepped the purposes with which the office was created some 30 years ago. He is now a parallel Secretary of State, a more effective one because of access to the President.

'The main conflict of viewpoint, which governed all other differences, concerned whether the Bangladesh crisis should be regarded as global or regional,' observe the Rudolphs. The professionals in the State saw it as a regional conflict, and they knew. The President and his National Security Adviser saw it primarily in the context of the 'China opening', which was part of Nixon's globalism. The two opposing viewpoints created two opposing realities.

The White House saw 'facts' which the State failed to see.

The Rudolphs as well as some of the other contributors recommend that State be given an effective hold in formulation and implementation of US policies pertaining to geopolitical regions not directly and immediately involved with the US-Soviet global relationship. The Rudolph essay yields many insights into the working and non-working of US foreign policy in South Asia and is therefore useful reading for members of the Indian foreign service.

Stephen P. Cohen's 'South Asia and US Military Policy' is a brilliant analysis of the dynamics of America's arms transfer relationship with Pakistan and India during the 1965-74 period. Over the years, Cohen has made a systematic study of South Asia's military problems and has earned his reputation as an objective, unbiased and perceptive scholar. His conclusion is that the 1967 arms transfer stand-off decision with regard to Pakistan and India made 'considerable sense.' It was sound regional policy. It was violated by Nixon and Kissinger first in 1970 with a 'one-time' transfer of arms to Pakistan and, subsequently, with no positive result either for the US or for the two South Asian neighbours.

In the light of this analysis, the Carter offer of substantial arms to Pakistan in the wake of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, Brzezinski's assurance to Gen. Zia that much more would follow if he accepted the first package of \$ 400 million threw all regionalism out of the window and was a blunt exercise in globalism, easily blunted.

There are several more readable chapters in the volume. Three deal with US policy for Pakistan during the 1971 crisis, and each has interesting insights. The other essays deal with the US response to the JVP insurgency in Sri Lanka in 1971, India-America foodgrains relations during 1965-68, US bilateral economic relations with South Asian countries, and US cultural relations. Altogether a useful addition to the literature on US foreign policy available in India.

Bhabani Sen Gupta

#### **THE DYNAMICS OF BANGLADESH SOCIETY**

by A. K. Nazmul Karim. Vikas Publishing House, Sahibabad, 1980.

#### **MINORITY POLITICS IN BANGLADESH**

by Ghulam Kabir. Vikas Publishing House, Sahibabad, 1980.

THE title of the first book is somewhat misleading. It is basically an historical study of Muslim Bengal, the evolution of its social structure, its class character, its political and social elite, the late emergence of a middle class and its role in building the country.



and providing leadership to the Bangladesh movement

Dr Karim is conscious of the limitations of this study which was his doctoral thesis presented in 1964. It does not cover Bangladesh society as a whole, leaving out its Hindu, Christian, Buddhist and animist components and its tribal elements. He is equally conscious of the fact that in unravelling the dynamics of Muslim society, in time and space, he has covered the entire historical Bengal and not Bangladesh alone. Thirdly, his emphasis is on history rather than on sociology. He is modest enough to acknowledge that 'further research will bring it to the present time'.

There is no doubt that geography, economy and language have made Bengalis what they are today, even in their religious attitude. But the contradiction is that religion has politically divided the Bengali homeland and created permanent barriers to its reunification by interacting decisively with economic and social factors. Dr Karim's thesis is that though both the Hindu and the Muslim elite responded to the impact of western culture which gave rise to revivalist or reform movements, these movements in the two communities followed 'parallel' courses, indifferent to and divorced from each other to begin with and antagonistic to each other after the Muslim middle class was born. This is an interesting example of how secularisation and modernisation led to sharpening of communal divisions and even to mutual alienation. Communalism is indeed a bourgeois malaise!

Not directly but by implication Dr Karim suggests the historical reason — the time-lag between the emergence of the Hindu and Muslim middle class. But why this time-lag? Was it because the Muslim social and political elite which was dominant when the British came, refused to compromise or shed its arrogance and retired from the contest and the Hindu elite freely collaborated with the alien regime, as clerk and tax-collector, and was in return rewarded with zamindari rights? Was it because the Muslim elite was either non-Bengali in origin or totally aloof from economic activity?

The book has a very interesting chapter on the origin of the traditional Muslim elite. The author's conclusion is that right from Moghul times to the Company era, while there were not many Muslim landholders, the core of the official elite was primarily Muslim. With the Moghul decline, a new aristocracy appeared — the employees of the Company and of its officers who enriched themselves through speculation and invested their earnings in land, thus giving rise to the new aristocracy of zamindars, largely Hindu.

The Muslim elite was a sponsored and artificial elite. It had no roots, it withered away as soon as protection and patronage were withdrawn. The laws of inheritance also played their part. Inevitably land passed into the hands of the new-rich, largely

Hindu. The coup d'grace was administered by the Hindu money-lender. The 'Ashraf' slowly disappeared. Islam in Bengal became the religion of the proletariat. Slowly, with the rise in education, an educated middle class appeared and displaced the impoverished Ashraf from leadership. This middle class, partly descended from foreign stock, had won local roots and then began the scramble between the Bhadrakol and the Muslim middle class which led to the division of Bengal.

The epilogue tries to bring the story up to date and focus on the reality of Bangladesh. The Bangladesh middle class, according to the author, is not merely an economic term but a cultural entity. A mere tradesman or shopkeeper would not be acceptable. By 1950, the masses had become politically conscious, the old aristocracy had lost its grip. The seeds of Bangladesh were sown when, once again, non-Bengalis provided leadership in business, industry and administration.

The book ends on a note of uncertainty. The upper class in Bangladesh today is tainted with corruption and collaboration. The middle class is losing its hold on the masses. The character of the future political elite is hard to discern.

The fact is that Bangladesh is a creation of the newly emergent Bengali Muslim bourgeoisie who felt lost and cheated in competition with the more mature and experienced and well-connected West Pakistani bourgeoisie. The real revolution is yet to come in Bangladesh. The son-of-the-soil, the 'Arzal' of yesterday, who was converted to Islam to escape the inequity of Hindu society, who launched the peasant revolts of the 19th century, shall, with time, acquire political maturity and wrest power from the parasitic and corrupt class of administrators, contractors and politicians, who have one leg in Dacca and the other in Geneva or London and who will scramble away, like rats from a sinking ship, at the first sign of economic or political crisis. Dr. Karim may find it difficult to delineate this process with inexorable logic but his study does indicate that the present elite cannot hold for long.

The book — a valuable study — suffers from a laboured style and poor printing. Also while rich in statistical data relating to the pre-1947 period, there are no comparable data for the post-1947 period.

*Minority Politics in Bangladesh* is perhaps a pioneering study of the Hindu minority by a Muslim scholar of Bangladesh who is essentially secular in approach as evident from the concluding sentence '... when politics would be based more on ideological lines or programmes than on religious identity'.

On Partition, the Hindu community formed 22 per cent of the population of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and was politically, economically and socially far more advanced than the Muslim com-



munity It dominated trade, commerce and industry, it was over-represented in administration and in the professions It owned much of urban property and held zamindari rights over rural land It had played a prominent role in the Bengali renaissance and in the independence movement and produced giants in many fields. But soon, mass migration, exercise of option by government servants, transfer of assets and business reduced it to a shadow of its former self, it diminished in size, wealth and power

This community is a minority by force as it is the Muslim majority which has resisted assimilation Politically its role has varied, according to the author, depending upon the cohesiveness of the Muslim community Between 1947-54, it was engaged in a struggle for survival, fighting for constitutional safeguards, between 1954-58 it took advantage of the rivalry between two emergent political parties and played a balancing role and maximised its share of power, between 1958-71, the initial retreat into political and economic stagnation was followed by regrouping and alliance with Bangladeshi nationalism But between 1971 and 1980 it does not appear to have received due rewards, has generally been out of the political mainstream, physically protected, culturally tolerated but unable to resist the slow drift towards Islamic identity, away from the secular model

Chapter V is the most interesting part of the book which sums up the author's thesis From a political angle, the notable fact is the Hindu community's strong commitment to a joint electorate despite under-representation in all post-partition legislatures Even in 1973, it held only 3.3 per cent of the seats Was it sheer inertia? Was it a reaction to Muslim separatism? Was it a desire to prove that the very basis of Partition was wrong? Was it the inner confidence that in due course Bengali nationalism would lead to political integration? There was also a contradiction During 1954-58, the Hindu community largely projected its interests through its own parties and not through non-communal Muslim-dominated parties. Only when Bengali nationalism became a force did the Hindu community join the Awami League and other secular parties This is understandable

In Bangladesh, the Hindu community may safeguard its interests through participation in parties which are national-secular rather than pan-Islamic-theocratic But neither would they desire nor are they under any pressure for cultural and social assimilation. It is doubtful whether the Hindu community would receive a just share of the fruits of development as they face collective discrimination and socio-economic mobility would be resisted A low profile has meant low-level of tensions Since 1971, there has not been a major communal riot or any mass emigration

This has a reason The author has not given a caste-wise break-up of the Hindu community My

surmise is that with emigration, the relative proportion of lower castes has risen with concomitant redirection of representation in administration, business and the professions The dominant group in any plural society does not feel any threat and consequently does not adopt a hostile posture, if the minority group keeps to its assigned place and does not clamour too much

Against this background, the author's hope that the Hindu community shall become an integrated part of Bangladesh society and politics and that politics will be based on ideology rather than religion is a bold statement when one remembers that the Muslim fundamentalism equates Islam with ideology

Bangladesh secularism is on trial so far as the Hindu minority has not received its due share of either political powers, or economic growth or social advance, it has been relegated permanently to pre-designated functions demanding no more than hereditary skills and reduced to a subsistence existence, this may be tolerance but it is neither justice nor equality This cannot lead to national integration but to cleavages which will show in times of crisis

The book has a very useful set of appendices including the texts of Indo-Pakistan agreements on minorities On the whole, it is a welcome addition for a better understanding of Bangladesh society and politics

Syed Shahabuddin

**NEPAL IN CRISIS** by Piers Blaikie, John Cameron and David Seddon Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1980

IN the twelve chapters of this book the authors have undertaken a socio-economic study of the West-Central region of Nepal with special reference to the effects of road construction General conclusions have been drawn for establishing a relationship of dependency between different countries and different elements within a single country The focus is on the finding that Nepal is now in a period of crisis, the major components of which include serious over-population relative to employment opportunities, ecological collapse in the densely populated and highly vulnerable hill areas and the elimination of certain 'natural' resources such as timber, both in the hills and in the plains

The author's analysis shows that the crisis is fundamentally rooted in a failure of productive organisation associated with its economic and political under-development It is remarked that an archaic tributary State supporting a small aristocracy situated in Kathmandu has been unable to change its fundamental structure. The failure to initiate or allow development of productive forces can be ascribed to an historical experience which has tragically constrained the possibilities of development 'The



symptoms of the malaise in Nepal as a whole appear visibly in the form of erosion, landslips, and widespread deficiencies in diet, shelter, and clothing which have been little affected by the rhetoric of development, and in the burgeoning of a bureaucracy financed largely by foreign aid yet quite unable to confront and solve the real problems.

After a brief survey of the historical antecedents, the book describes the economy and the society as prevailing in Nepal. It has been observed that as one of the least-developed countries in the world, with an economy already in serious difficulties, Nepal is in a weak position to demand great control over the new sectional and regional allocation of resources from foreign aid, and the indications are, in any case, that the ability of the Nepalese State machinery to handle such increased responsibility is at present insufficient. The unavoidable result, however, is the predominance of a piecemeal and uncoordinated series of projects and programmes accentuating and exacerbating the difficulties experienced even within the Nepalese bureaucracy itself in maintaining sufficient communication and cooperation between different departments.

In its social and spatial structure, the bureaucracy reflects the inequalities prevalent in Nepalese society as a whole. But the perpetuation of privilege, patronage, discrimination and regional inequality within the apparatus of the State is particularly damaging to Nepal's prospects because of the fact that, in the absence of an open political structure and genuine popular participation, it is this apparatus that would have to conceive, plan and implement measures capable of preventing the coming crisis. There has been a large expansion of bureaucracy in the last decade but its contribution to economic development has been just minimal.

The authors examine the changing structure of commerce as a result of the burgeoning of the administration. While there has been a phenomenal increase in the number of establishments in almost every type of trading activity, the general lack of integration between production and marketing has not prevented merchants from making substantial profits. Given the predominantly agrarian nature of the Nepalese economy, it is the failure in agriculture that provides the crucial structural weakness of the entire economic base. The 'stagnation' of productive activity in the urban areas and the absence of capitalist development in other than a stunted form are unfortunately matched in the rural areas.

The combination of balance of trade deficit with India with low and declining domestic output per head leads to increasing reliance upon financial 'support' from outside the country and over-use of extremely limited physical resources within the country, barely postponing an inevitable crisis and, at the same time, serving to increase its impact on the most vulnerable members of society. It is also pointed out that this particular form of underdevelop-

ment is not peculiar to Nepal as some other countries have also undergone the same experience.

In sum, the major stance taken by the authors is that the country is now in a period of crisis, a crisis which will be associated with an increasing inability to pay for imported commodities, with growing food shortages and, consequently, with the development of widespread unrest in both rural and urban areas, which together will threaten the viability of the prevailing political system and even Nepal's position as an independent State. 'The failure of the government, over the last twenty years, to halt or even slow down the apparently inexorable movement into crisis and even ultimately to catastrophe (despite a growing realisation among some Nepalese of the imminent nature of the crisis), as well as the almost complete lack of concern with such problems on the part of the ruling class prior to 1951, must be seen as an integral part of the political economy of Nepal.'

The book is quite provocative and is bound to generate a thorough-going debate amongst the knowledgeable.

Navin Chandra Joshi

**THE U.S.S.R. IN ASIA: An Interperceptional Study of Soviet-Asian Relations (With a Critique of Soviet Role in Afghanistan) by Bhabani Sen Gupta** Young Asia Publications, New Delhi, 1980.

BHABANI Sen Gupta's book is an impressive piece of work and the most comprehensive study to date of relations between the Soviet Union and the countries of Asia which are presented with great lucidity. The book deals with highly complex matters which are inextricably connected with the whole flow of the political history of several countries and which at the same time reach into the very depths of their social and political history.

There is first a detailed analysis of the Soviet world view — a mosaic of images of the socialist system (the Soviet self image), the capitalist system, etc. Special stress has been laid on the Asian strategic environment, the Soviet security model for Asia and Soviet naval power in the Asian waters. The book ends with a chapter on predictions on future Soviet behaviour in Asia. What is noteworthy is that it has a detailed postscript covering all the major contemporary international developments, like the Sino-Vietnamese War of 1979, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan etc. These developments, undoubtedly, are going to leave an indelible imprint on the future course of international relations. One hopes that the author would write in depth about these developments.

Bhabani Sen Gupta effectively argues that foreign policy decision makers everywhere including the Soviet Union 'react not to international realities but to their images of these realities'. Foreign policy decisions involve choices among preferences from alternatives. And choices are determined by



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the images the decision makers have of their own nations and the world outside. The main thesis is that the Soviet Asian relations 'reflect their perception of one another'. Relations between nations are the friendliest when their mutual perceptions converge and are the poorest when they diverge.

On the basis of this analysis of mutual perceptions the author concludes that 'The widest degree of convergence exists in the Soviet and Indian strategic perceptions' (page 440). On the other hand the Soviet and Japanese diverge in their perceptions resulting in not so friendly relations between these two countries. The author further argues that 'it is possible to measure the scale of friendliness and hostility between and among nations by measuring the degree of compatibility and incompatibility of their perceptions' (page 428). A study of changing mutual perceptions enables us to predict the behavioural patterns in the relations of countries.

Since it is impossible within the confines of this review to do even approximate justice to the richness of the contents of the book, it may be best to devote what follows primarily to a few critical comments in the hope that they may be accepted or at least dealt with by the author later. The problem of determining 'perceptions' and 'images' with reasonable precision is likely to be a most difficult task. Our difficulties are compounded when we deal with the Soviet Union. This is because, as the author points out, Soviet foreign policy is a formidable industry involving thousands of people belonging to the Party, the Government, the Universities and Research Institutes — (Page 434).

Perceptions and images of various interest groups or industrial members of each interest group cannot be homogeneous in character. In any case, analytically there is a strong case to separate the Soviet ideological perceptions from Soviet perceptions of realities. If we confine ourselves only to ideological perceptions, there is a greater degree of divergence than on the plane of realities. Sen Gupta himself points out 'The Western perceptions of international realities in the 1970s mirror or nearly mirror the Soviet perceptions.' (page 31)

- Similarly, the author's statement that 'the Marxist-Leninist theory is applied by the policy maker to chart the broad course of Soviet foreign policy' (page 434) may not be easily accepted by many so long as the arguments of the opposite school of thought on the subject are not refuted. A growing number of scholars find more pragmatism than ideology in Soviet behaviour. They contend that historically and generally at almost all critical junctures the Soviet policy decisions were based on pragmatism rather than on a few generalizations drawn from Marxism-Leninism.

These comments will in no way reduce the significance of Sen Gupta's work. Indeed, the author has made an original contribution not only to a comprehensive analysis of Soviet-Asian relations but also

towards the development of a theory of international relations. What is most satisfying from this reviewer's point of view is that Bhabani Sen Gupta has put Indian (also Third World) scholarship on Soviet affairs on par with the highest international standards.

Nirmala Joshi

**BONES OF CONTENTION: An Enquiry into East-West Relations by Sir Terence Garvey Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1978**

VERY rarely does a western scholar attempt a dispassionate and objective analysis of East-West relations. The usual theme is disarmingly simple. The Soviet Union, it is felt, is out to dominate the world and to challenge its inexorable drive towards global conquest, the West has no alternative but to arm itself. In essence, the arms race, the most tragic and dangerous manifestation of East-West tensions, is inevitable and is a direct result of Soviet intransigence and lack of interest in genuine accommodation with the West.

While not totally rejecting the notion of the Soviet Union being the Fifth Horseman of the Apocalypse, Terence Garvey neatly and lucidly demolishes the simplistic thinking that prevails in Washington and London and that will undoubtedly gain added momentum with the anointment of Ronald Reagan. Garvey has been a professional diplomat in China, Yugoslavia, India and the Soviet Union itself and thus having had the benefit of 'field experience' has his mind free of the many cobwebs that fill the intellects of academics and scholars.

This thesis is not startlingly original. He starts out his diagnosis of the East-West problem by an excursion into Russian history, which he rightly points out is a 'continuum'. From an abbreviated and selective account of Russia's past, he concludes that 'its (Russia's) pre-revolutionary past offers valuable clues about why much that is done in the Soviet Union is done in the way it is and that some conditioning experiences have left an abiding mark on Russian behaviour and habits of thought'.

What is this pre-revolutionary tradition that is the key to understanding the Soviet *Weltanschauung*? Because of circumstances of history and geography, this tradition, Garvey observes, was violent in its methods, for violence seemed to offer the only prospect of change in Tsarist Russia, conspiratorial in its organization, for secrecy was necessary for survival, and total in its aims since nothing short of total liquidation of Tsarist absolutism would change Russia for good.

Further, historical experience has taught Russians to regard a government claiming and exercising absolute authority, and political policemen as an institution as normal, as not something totally surprising. There was a time, Garvey continues, when the modernization imperative led Peter the



Great to open the floodgates for western ideas and influences. In a very apposite phrase, Garvey characterises Peter's reforms as being made in the 'spirit of borrowing from and not assimilation to Europe'. 'We need Europe for a few decades,' Garvey quotes Peter's advice, and 'then must turn our backs on it.'

It is impossible to describe all of Garvey's profound historical analysis here. Suffice to say, with this perspective, Garvey attempts to understand the evolution of Stalinist and post-Stalinist Russia both in relation to itself and the outside world.

Refreshingly for a western diplomat, Garvey concludes that the Russians have been as much sinned against as sinning and that western cold war tactics reinforced existing Soviet pre-conceptions regarding the implacable hostility of the capitalist world towards the socialist system. These tactics reached their apogee under John Foster Dulles and were a mixture of psychological warfare and propaganda designed to encourage resistance and subvert authority in communist countries, to 'liberate' Eastern Europe and to 'rollback' Soviet military power.

Garvey's *piece de resistance* is the chapter on the arms race entitled 'How much is enough?'. His conclusion, after a detailed analysis of the military balance between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. in terms of ICBMs, SLBMs, and long-range bombers and of the course of events which preceded the arms build-up, is that 'the arms race need never have taken place had the Russians after 1945 not given grounds for believing that they were out to convert the military victory over Hitler into the victory for Socialism in Europe'. But Garvey continues 'once the race was on, it was for the most part (except for Khrushchov's bluffs and boasts) the United States that administered the successive upward boosts to the spiral of nuclear competition'.

The chapter is a masterpiece and Garvey explains in plain and simple language the many arcane details and jargon that litter arms control discussions. He observes that in addition to measuring the strategic balance in terms of launcher strength, other standards of measurement can be applied — deliverable warheads, equivalent megatonnage, missile throw-weight and bomber payload. By any standard, he estimates that a second-strike (retaliatory) capability has long been acquired by both sides, mutually assured destruction (MAD, an acronym that just about sums it up) has been achieved and there is rough parity between the two sides.

Garvey traces the long and tortuous history of arms control negotiations that began in the early sixties and identifies the factors that have bedevilled the successful implementation of various treaties. He rightly points out that neither the Anti-Ballistic Missiles System (ABM) Treaty nor SALT-I have deterred new innovations in missile technology. The Soviet Union developed intercontinental-range missile launchers that threatened American second-strike capability and the supersonic bomber known

as the Backfire. The Americans meanwhile began to work on the cruise missile, the lineal descendant of Hitler's flying bomb, the B-1 intercontinental bomber to replace the B-52, the MX mobile missile and the 8 Trident SLBM. The net effect of all these developments, Garvey laments, has been to obfuscate the accepted distinctions between strategic and tactical, nuclear and conventional, and throw up insoluble problems of verification and proliferation.

The other bone of contention is the question of human rights in the Soviet Union. Garvey neatly demolishes the 'linkage' concept so forcefully advocated by American scholars and politicians. Linkage, he says, may be the essence of negotiation, but it needs to be used with discrimination. Any policy that makes everything — arms control technology, trade, grain exports — conditional on the prior performance of Soviet obligations to abide by human rights is something, that he cautions, should not be attempted. He cites the ill-fated Jackson amendment to the Trade Bill of 1974 that made American trade concessions to the Soviet Union subject to the maintenance of a satisfactory rate of emigration of Soviet jews (Senator Henry Jackson who might end up in the Reagan administration, put a figure of 60,000 visas a year as the minimum) as an example of how *not* to do things. The Soviets simply declined to oblige, the rate of Jewish emigration further dropped and the Russians shopped elsewhere for their needs. Garvey is very realistic when he says that a 'comprehensive change in the nature and goals of Soviet society and the Soviet state is beyond the scope of Detente'.

Nevertheless, in spite of the bones of contention that embody a deeper underlying antagonism antedating 1917, Garvey sees hope for the future. This is because the Soviet economy needs the West for industrial modernization and for producing consumer goods, and the western economies equally badly need the large untapped Soviet market both for their agriculture and industrial produce. In time, Soviet raw materials may even lubricate the western economies. In addition, the Soviet 'grand' design is changing and the dream of a world revolution is gradually fading away as a result of cracks appearing in the international communist movement. Garvey is hopeful that the replacement of the present generation of Soviet leaders, prisoners of the past, by men and women whose historical experiences have been quite different, will lead to a greater understanding between the two sides. Time, in short, wounds all heels.

This book is a major and outstanding contribution to our thinking about super power rivalry. It must be read and digested by anybody interested and concerned with the dynamics of the Moscow-Washington hiatus. In his Preface, Garvey apologises that his book has no pretensions to being a work of scholarship. Were it that more such 'un-scholarly' but 'hard headed' works come out more often.

Jairam Ramesh



IF the title seems familiar, let the reader be reassured that the book is not Dr Singh's 1974 article of the same title writ large. A new, though certainly not original, dimension has been added to the Pahlavi quest for security that accords priority to threats to the regime as well as the interlocking threats to national security by centrifugal forces and external challenge. The most dangerous threat to the regime and national security, perceived as indissociable by the 'ruling' elite, was internal and not the external challenges concentrated upon. Moreover, Dr. Singh argues that despite the emergence of an Islamic Republic in Iran the character of the threat that challenged the absolutism of the Pahlavi monarchy and now the Islamic fundamentalism of post revolutionary Iran, remains the same, the secular democratic forces. The Shah in his determination to squash the secular democratic forces indirectly helped to strengthen the conservative forces that ultimately posed the real challenge to the regime, abortively in '63 and successfully in '78

Yet, the very organisational structure of the book casts doubts on the coherency of Dr Singh's thesis. The examination of the internal dimension of threats to the regime is skimmed through in 43 pages while the external dimension of national security threats is comprehensively analysed in 310 pages. The subsequent chapter on the Shah's decline buttresses the first, though with 310 pages to vault over. Even more striking is the qualitative difference in handling. Conspicuously, the last chapter on the new regime meant to support the burden of the thesis of continuity in the basic challenges to both regimes, is devoid of all but a few footnotes in sharp contrast to their abundance in other chapters.

Moreover, neither the ruling elite nor the secular democratic forces are precisely defined. Indeed, even such parties as the National Front are scarcely mentioned. One wonders why Dr. Singh did not draw upon James Bill's analysis in the *Politics of Iran* of the 'middle class', perceived by the Iranian political elite as the most dangerous class. Besides, the statement that the Shah by the early 60s had failed in his efforts to attract broader political support, on the basis of deterioration of relations with previous focus of power (the landowners, merchants, religious leaders and intelligentsia), betrays a confusion about the Iranian situation. The Shah through his White Revolution of 1963 had specifically sought to undermine the power of the traditional Qajar elite and create a bond with the peasants and the new industrial elite. By assuming control over the means of power, education and land, the Shah was able to manipulate the elite.

However, Dr Singh, in his elaboration of the tactics to meet the internal challenges, makes no mention of either the White Revolution or the policy of economic co-optation of dissenters. Indeed, the related argument that it was deceleration in the

economic momentum of Iran as a result of declining oil revenues that was a crucial element in the Shah's fall, is also ignored by Dr Singh.

A much surer grasp is demonstrated in the examination of the external dimension. Its strength lies not in the originality of analysis but in illuminating relevant details that such earlier writers as Chubin and Zabih and Ramazani had not taken into account in their definitive works on relations with the super powers and the Arabs. More important, Dr Singh brings up to date the security perceptions and policies of Iran.

While the plethora of footnotes and quotations from secondary sources acknowledges his debt, yet it is really questionable whether it was necessary to so frequently use quotations for reiterating banalities, e.g., 'The rise of ... Nasser .. leader of Egypt but also spokesman for Arab nationalism and unity was watched with interest if not concern in Iran'. Dr. Singh in much of the book appears to be writing for the initiated, as he assumes considerable familiarity with the area, yet for the initiated surely much of the book is needlessly repetitive. Moreover, there is too often a scant regard for historical movement. The Iran mediating between Afghanistan and Pakistan in 1962 and working for a rapprochement between Pakistan and India/Afghanistan in the 70s, is a very different Iran both in power and in awareness of its eastern security-economic dimension.

Dr Singh's analysis of the extension of Iran's security perimeter into the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean and the 'encirclement thesis' is less derivative. However, the assertion that the encirclement thesis hinged upon Iran-Indian rivalry in '72-'73, is surely a misreading of the situation. Certainly there was the scenario of a pincer movement by India and Iraq on Iran with the Soviet Union behind both. But the intrusion of India into Iran's security spectrum was the result of an indirect fallout of a perceived menacing configuration that incidentally impacted upon bilateral Indo-Iran relations, rivalry does not yet figure.

Moreover, Dr Singh's argument that the Iran-Pakistan relationship concretised in Cento, was counterbalanced by Iran-India economic relations, seems confused. It ignores the RCD, as well as the fact that while Baghdad Pact-Cento date from 1955, the real breakthrough in Iran's economic relations with India is in 1965 with the Madras oil refinery. This should however be seen in the context of their mutual economic complementarity. Since India imported more than 90% of its oil from the Iranian oil consortium, it was but expected that when Iran should seek to develop its own oil industry, India would be a natural partner.

Despite these inadequacies, the book is nonetheless a considerable contribution to the study of Iran. The reader should however be warned that it is littered with serious printing inaccuracies, e.g., the Treaty of Erzerum is dated 1947 instead of 1847, the Mardom and Melliyum parties are said



to have been formed in 1975, the year of the Rastakharz party, some 20 years later

Rita Manchanda

**INDIA'S AID DIPLOMACY IN THE THIRD WORLD** by Dewan C Vohra Vikas Publishing House, Sahibabad, 1980

THIS book was released recently amid much newspaper publicity by Dr Charanjit Chanaana, the Minister of State for Industry, Vohra being the Dr's Special Assistant. The author defines his objective thus — to provide a cost-benefit analysis of India's aid diplomacy, to examine its impact in the Third World, to uncover the justification for the huge expenditure incurred on the economic aspects of foreign policy. As a purely descriptive and anecdotal account, Vohra's treatise is a painstaking and meticulous piece of work, as an analytical and evaluative (cost-benefit in the strictest sense of the term) effort, the book falls woefully short.

Aid, to paraphrase Clausewitz, is an extension of politics by other means. No country provides aid — money, technology, products, services — out of sheer altruism. Aid, as has been observed for the developed nations of both the western and Soviet bloc, is an important instrument for promoting economic and foreign policy objectives. While scholars have debated about the extent of leverage exercised by aid givers to India, much less is known about how India has used the aid and assistance it provides to other countries, bilaterally and multilaterally, for its own good.

For, as Vohra points out, while we are a recipient of massive amounts of aid, we have also emerged as an important contributor to the development efforts of other countries in Asia and Africa. Vohra calculates that in the period 1947-79, India's aid expenditure overseas has been around Rs 2500 crores of which roughly 65 per cent is in the form of capital investments and the remaining as technical assistance. This expenditure comprises anywhere between 0.1 and 0.3 per cent of GNP annually and compares favourably with the 0.2-0.4 range observed for the OECD donor countries.

Vohra's review uncovers different motivations and different channels for India's aid diplomacy. The motivations are, obviously, complex and are tailored to the specific situation. Nevertheless, one can identify a marked progression in Indian attitudes towards cooperation with other countries. Initially, as Vohra points out, India's aid diplomacy was concentrated exclusively in Bhutan, Nepal and Sikkim, having inherited payment obligations from the British. The second phase involved the Colombo Plan signed in 1950, which gave India the opportunity to provide expertise to other Commonwealth countries. Indian aid objectives then got closely intertwined with the propagation of the non-alignment policy.

In the late fifties and early sixties, Indian aid diplomacy took on an added dimension in the wake

of serious India-China rifts. Aid, specially to the Himalayan Kingdom and the newly emergent nations of Africa, was provided to counter Chinese influence. This desire to compete with the Chinese as it were was institutionalised with the establishment of the Indian Technical aid Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC) launched in 1964. While the sixties were spent in countering Chinese influence and restoring India's credibility in the non-aligned world, the early seventies were taken up predominantly with the reconstruction and development of Bangladesh and securing a peaceful 'eastern' border. Finally, as the recession hit the domestic economy, the industrial infrastructure matured and the needs of the OPEC nations became evident, Indian aid efforts were expanded to cover the exports of technology in the form of joint ventures and project consultancy.

Vohra does not analyse with any profound insights each of the above phases that have marked India's aid diplomacy. He does mention the massive amounts of aid injected into Bangladesh. But what happened. Is it the Big Brother syndrome—part and parcel of the aid packages—that has resulted in the growing strains in India-Bangladesh relationships? What factors caused these rifts and what chastening lessons has India learnt in the process? Again, Nepal has received large amounts of aid both from India and China, as has Tanzania. How do they compare and what relative benefits has India derived? Or take joint ventures. The picture here is not as rosy as Vohra piously hopes. The reality is quite different. Of the 345 joint ventures approved as of December 1, 1978, only 107 or 31 per cent had been implemented and were in production, 149 or 43 per cent had been abandoned and 89 were under implementation. Further, an analysis made of 23 manufacturing units in Malaysia indicated that 90 per cent of the firms which had begun commercial production were in serious financial trouble. Foreign exchange gains have been paltry. The mortality rate is high. Why?

Unfortunately, Vohra's bland approach does not reveal much except to feed the reader with a mass of figures. While his diagnosis is almost non-existent, his recommendations are simplistic. Vohra identifies the 'present bureaucratic-labyrinthine administrative structure' as the weakest spot that hampers the style of Indian diplomacy. Why this is so, is not examined or substantiated. Vohra recommends a 'unified aid' administration agency in the form of a separate government department. I am not so sure whether this does not constitute another 'bureaucratic' solution that only treats the symptoms of the problem. Indeed, our foreign service may have to be revamped in order to promote economic policy objectives. It is no secret that diplomats of countries like France and West Germany are actually functioning as trade representatives and as effective promoters of economic links with their countries.

Vohra has, in his own way, made an important contribution by raising fundamental questions on



the interaction between economic and foreign policy. By no means a definitive work, it serves as a 'ready information manual'. The problem is that Vohra is excessively sanguine about the efficacy of India's aid diplomacy and has taken little pains to rigorously evaluate what indeed has been accomplished. Thus his book reads like a fairy tale, replete with exaggerated hopes and expectations.

Jairam Ramesh

**ONE WORLD TO SHARE** by Shridath Ramphal,  
Oxford University Press, 1980

'IT IS in the nature of man that each generation in turn reflects and inaugurates change. But the character and pace of change are never constant, and there are times when human needs demand that change be structural and revolutionary rather than marginal and evolutionary—and that it proceed with unusual urgency. It is in such a time that we live; and because it is, none of us live any longer in the kind of world into which we were born. And the rhythm of change is actually gaining momentum.' This is the central theme of the book under review, which is a collection of the author's speeches over a period of time, and which makes an honest attempt in creating global awareness of the Third World's problems.

Barbara Ward, in her illuminating introduction has made a balanced review of the book apart from introducing the theme and genre of its discussion. 'The emergence of the right not to be colonized during a period in many ways dominated by colonialism is not the only paradox of Europe's brief but effective imperial span. Unlike most preceding empires, it coincided with, indeed, helped to bring about a total re-ordering of man's economic activities and relations. the growing emphasis in the Third World on the need for a new economic order is, at its root, the realization that national sovereignty is not enough.. Mr Ramphal is clearly on the soundest possible grounds in his plea for a new, more open economic order when he bases it on mutual (in italics) self-interest, on the gains to the whole world economy. "Inseparable humanity" needs justice and compassion no doubt. But it also needs information and common sense. In fact, it requires a genuine fusion of generosity and compassion with enlightened self interest'

The Commonwealth of 1950 had eight members, it now has thirty-five. S. Ramphal has been its Secretary-General since July 1975. In view of this background and experience, one would expect him to be objective in assessment and polished in presentation. However, he fails us on both counts, especially in dealing with things like 'International Immorality'? Such rhetorical exercises are highly counterproductive, as evidenced by the widening gap between the rich and poor nations. The need of the hour is the prudence-seasoned pragmatism practised by Nehru, the archpriest of the Commonwealth

In an interview in 1963, Nehru had told me, 'Foreign policy is, after all, an extension of internal policy. If we work hard, produce more, and are strong economically, it naturally gets projected into our external dealings. We are sure to be respected more and more. I am sad we Afro-Asians are lazy by nature'. While this is an honest self-assessment of a Commonwealth veteran, its present Secretary-General (the author) has exhibited throughout the book, a biased approach in dealing with the LDCs, and with the developed countries. Though his spirit of championing a cause is admirable, his exercise in over-anxiety is undesirable, since it smokes out all aid and good service rendered by the developed countries. This further widens the chasm between the North and South.

The exploiter and exploited stand equally to be blamed. Why the LDCs allowed themselves to be exploited has escaped the author's attention. He himself admits of frustration regarding the developing countries and concludes 'the essential effort of development must be their own'. If they are lazy, not industrious, faction-ridden, and are not in tune with the times, they have to pay a heavy price, and at times a whole race has to suffer. This kind of self-introspection would have enriched the image of the volume. His speeches at UNCTAD and other places reflect his genuine anxiety for the underdeveloped and his yearning to elevate them. His documentation of 'a pattern of pervasive and constantly enlarging disparities in the human condition', his call for removal of trade restrictions, and his timely warning that economic chaos could result by ignoring the debt problem, are indeed laudable.

How the Atlantic Charter led to the Bretton Woods agreement, and how the lack of modes of international cooperation resulted in thirty years inertia, which led to a call by the Commonwealth Prime Ministers in Kingston in 1975 'for a more just and equitable new international economic order', which is now accepted by the U N, has been convincingly argued. New ideas of an international commodity agency as envisaged by Keynes are indeed worth a trial.

Discussing global horizons, Ramphal points out how the resource problems of energy and water, and science and technology are almost monopolized by the rich world and, finally, the oceans and outer space that are a common heritage of mankind, are becoming a battleground of conflicting interests. India, the largest in the Commonwealth, and Nehru, its keystone, deserved more space. Western passivity, problem of apartheid, new global equity are other highlights of the book.

The publishers are fully justified in claiming 'this thought provoking and important book forms a vital contribution to the continuing dialogue between North and South'.

B. Shyam Sunder



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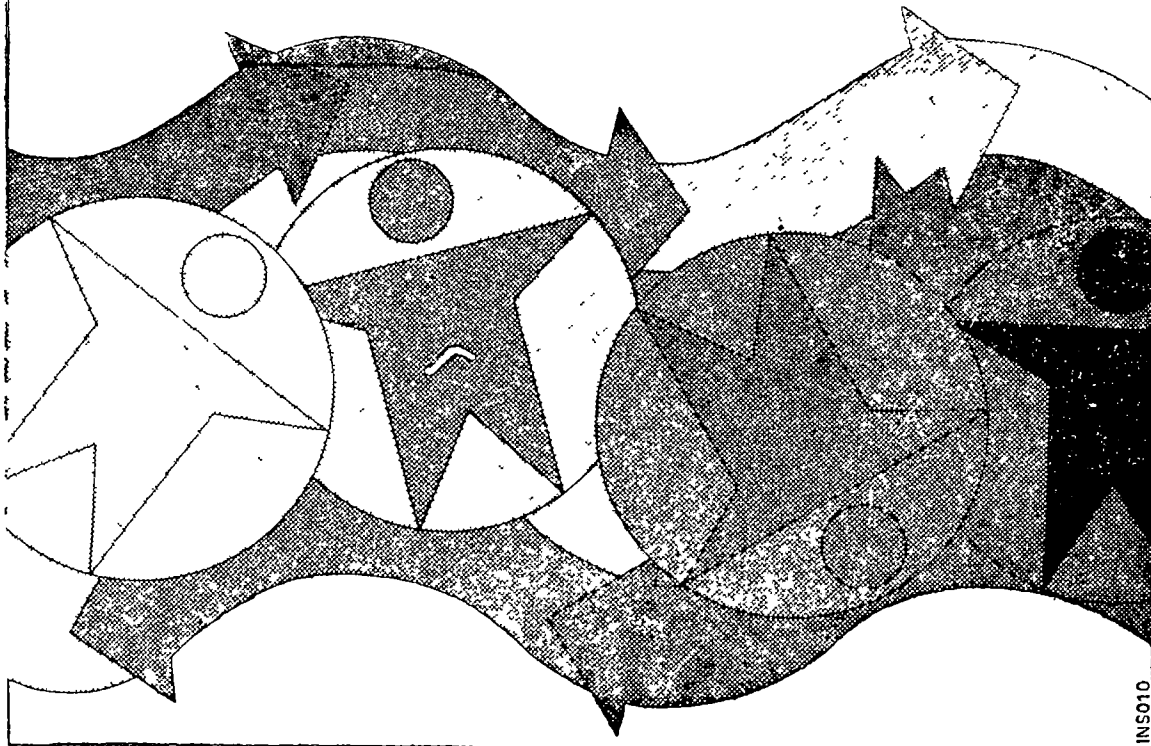
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